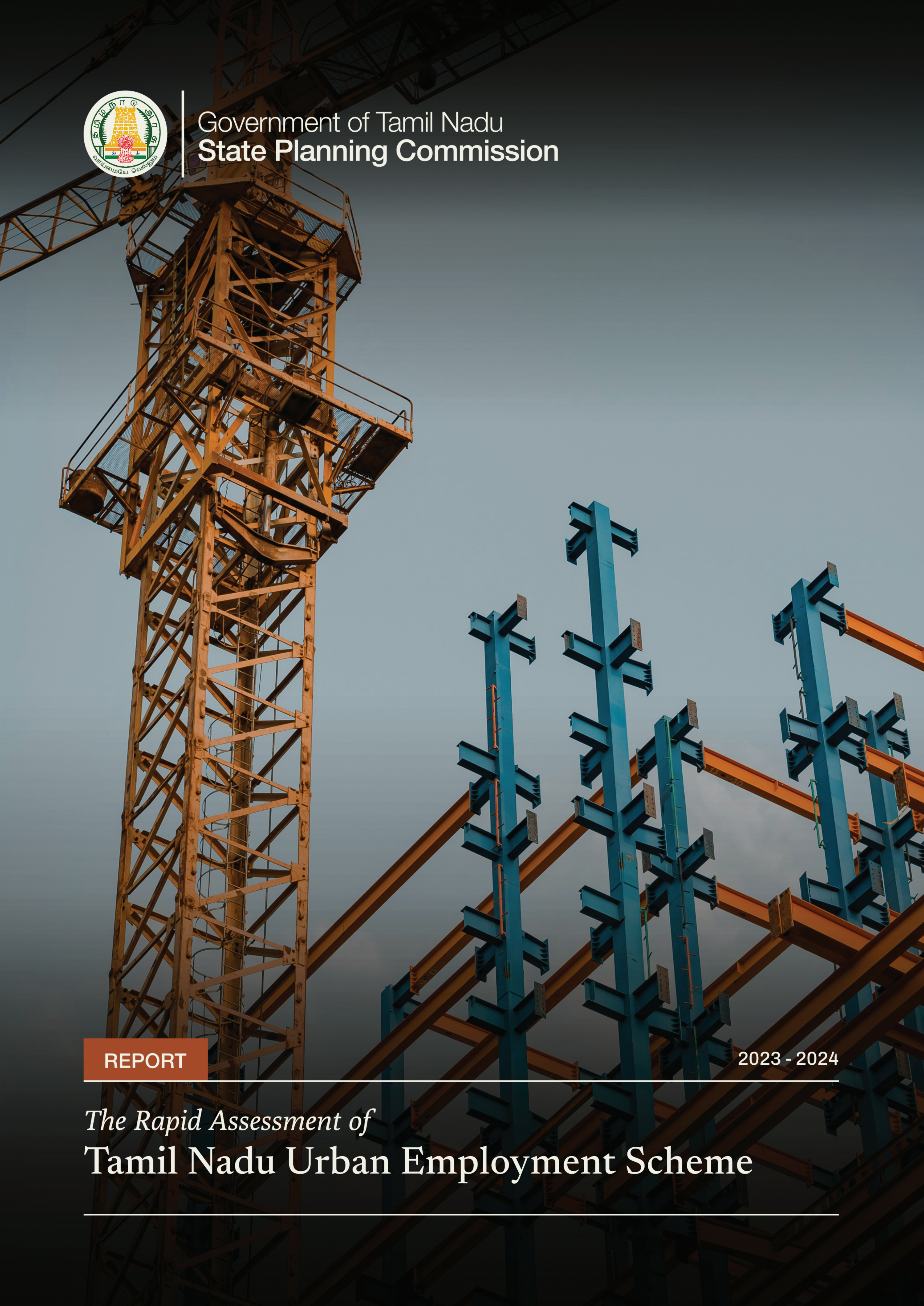

Government of Tamil Nadu
State Planning Commission

REPORT

2023 - 2024

The Rapid Assessment of

Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme

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Foreword

In our collective journey towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the efforts role of the Government of Tamil Nadu is pre-emanating. clearly stand outis impeccable The Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES), implemented by the Department of Municipal Administration and Water Supply is a stellar example of such an endeavour with an emphasis on poverty reduction, employment and gender participation in urban areas.

The scheme envisages addressing SDG 1, ending poverty in all its forms everywhere by providing wage employment opportunities to the urban poor and assuring economic growth. This wage employment further helps to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, which is the SDG 2. By enabling access to employment in the neighbourhood, the scheme also addresses the SDG 5, that is to that aims at ensuring achieve gender equality and empower all women through the scheme where a staggering 85% of the beneficiaries are being women reflects a paradigm shift in societal norms. Women, who were once relegated to the fringes of the workforce, are now occupying the central stage, contributing actively to the economic and social fabric of Tamil Nadu. The empowerment of women is not only a matter of equity but also a catalyst for sustainable development. And needless Needless to add, the scheme also contributes strongly to promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all as envisaged in SDG 8 by bringing in non-workers into the labour market.

The pivotal role played by the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme in fostering economic growth perhaps most importantly, contributing to the post-COVID-19 economic revival in the state. It is also addressing SDG 8 that aims at promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. TNUES realises with provision of decent work to the urban poor especially to population who were unskilled and unable to participate in the labour market competition.

SDG 1, with its noble aim of eradicating poverty in all its forms, is not just a goal but a moral imperative. The TNUES through its astute policies and tireless implementation, has been instrumental in this mission towards providing meaningful employment, skills, and training opportunities to the underprivileged and marginalized. It has empowered women from economically and socially marginalised brought hope and prosperity to countless households. If this scheme can be scaled up, it can contribute immensely towards building a more equitable society by contributing to the healthcare and educational expenditure of marginal households. This scheme, through dignified work, has not only lifted people out of poverty but has also laid the foundations for a more equitable society.

This Rapid Assessment is therefore not merely an account of responses but inputs into developing a blueprint for a scaled up version of the schemethe future. It offers insights into the scheme's successes and areas wyhere refinement is needed. Policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners can draw valuable lessons from this assessment to design and implement similar initiatives that align with the SDGs.

Let us also reaffirm our commitment to leaving no one behind in the economic development as expressed by Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Together, we can continue to harness the power of targeted initiatives to drive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, fostering inclusive growth, gender equality, and economic recovery.

Regards

Dr. J. Jeyaranjan
Vice Chairman,
State Planning Commission

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Executive Summary

The Government of TamilNadu introduced the **Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES)** as a pilot livelihood intervention to provide employment opportunities with basic minimum wages for the working-age population in select Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) partly based on the recommendations of the 24-member committee, headed by ex-RBI Governor **Dr C. Rangarajan,** set up to propose measures to bring the Covid-19- battered economy of Tamil Nadu back to the growth path. The selected sites include a few zones in Corporations, seven municipalities, and 37 town panchayats across the state

The scheme guidelines defined different wage rates per person-day across different kinds of **urban local bodies (ULBs)** as well as the kind of work that can be undertaken that included maintenance of water resources, jungle clearance, park maintenance and tree planting. By December 2022, the scheme had enrolled a significant number of beneficiaries, with 2, 04,860 persons issued Job Cards. But less than 1% of those enrolled have received work. The amount of work offered was also lower than anticipated, with those enrolled getting fewer number of person-days of work.

The study sought to understand the impact of this scheme on the ground and to identify the various factors influencing the implementation of the scheme. The assessment would therefore help understand the scope for scaling up as well as address the gaps in design and implementation. The rapid assessment held from the second week of February to the First week of March 2023. The study was done through a stratified sample survey, covering 2 zones from Greater Chennai Corporation, one zone each from Coimbatore and Tirunelveli, 4 Municipalities, and 11 Town Panchayats.

The following are the key results of the analysis

Women contribute the majority of those employed under the TNUES. Out of the total 566 respondents, 470 (83%) were women. A significant majority (69%) of the respondents fall within the age group of 31 to 50 years, and another 18% belong to the age group of above 50 years.

Eigh ty-three per cent (83%) of the respondents – worked and not worked - have studied less than the 10th standard, and 25.96% of the respondents have never been to school. The majority of the women who participated in the survey (55.1%) were not employed anywhere.

Many of these women are dependent on traditional home-based work like flower arrangements, incense stick rolling, beedi rolling etc, which gives them low income but is not available on a regular basis.

More than 22% of the participants in the scheme are agricultural workers indicating the role played by the sector in employing women in urban areas, especially town panchayats. The scheme therefore helps such women to offset income fluctuations from seasonality as well as decline in agricultural employment. At least one-fourth (24.7%) of the respondents who have enrolled in the TNUES project are primary breadwinners in the family and almost 18% of women come from female-headed households.

A considerable percentage of respondents (34.7%) have applied for the TNUES job card without fully understanding the kind of work to be offered by the scheme. Further, 57.4% of those who applied for TNUES job cards are unaware of the per day wages offered under the scheme.

In most places, the average number of days employed was less than 30, indicating scope for improvement. This was particularly low in town panchayats. One factor was that the available work had to be apportioned among a larger number participants seeking employment. Many respondents pointed to the need to be intimated sufficiently in advance about the availability of work to help them plan their other work schedules to participate better.

The lowest wages received by a worker was Rs. 60 in Sundarapandiyapuram Town Panchayat in Tenkasi and Ananthapuram in Villupuram District. As the pay was piece-rated and rates fixed at the state level, the prescribed work norms did not take into account the age and gender of the participants, and the local conditions of soil, terrain, etc making it difficult for participants to meet the norm in some cases.

While almost 62% of the participants got wages within the stipulated time, the remaining participants reported delays. A much smaller share reported delays of more than 2 months.

The additional income accruing to the households was mostly spent on day-to-day expenses, followed by education and health expenses. Across all ULBs, almost 99% of respondents wanted the scheme to be continued and expanded.

Based on the findings, the report makes a few recommendations.

Most importantly, there is considerable demand for this scheme, indicating a need for expanding the scope of this scheme across ULBs. Given the shortfall of funds available with several ULBs for asset maintenance, this scheme can be aligned with public infrastructure maintenance such as Anganwadi centres, schools, community halls, bus stands, hospitals and other public buildings.

The recommendations call for the preparation of an annual works calendar considering agricultural seasons, existing seasonal occupations, local needs, festivals, and other relevant factors. Piece rates can also be finalised based on inputs from ULB officials and representatives to ensure that the local ecologies and demographic profile of participants are taken on board.

Priority maybe given to elderly, infirm, pregnant and lactating mothers, and the differently abled. Work hours can also be made flexible to ensure higher participation of women burdened with care work. Enhancing transparency and accountability, participation of elected representatives and formation of area and ward sabhas are also recommended for enhancing the impact of the project. Details are provided at the end of the report.

Introduction

The state government introduced the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES) as a livelihood intervention to provide employment opportunities with basic minimum wages for the working-age population in municipalities, corporations, and town panchayats. Employment in this scheme is not meant to deny labour for other sectors. Those individuals who are capable and willing to work for higher wages available in the market are free to do so. The scheme is targeted towards urban sections of the society that are willing to work but unable to find employment. This inability may be due to various factors such as the inability to migrate for better opportunities, prevailing gender norms, family responsibilities, lack of skills, or educational qualifications, health and disability among others. The scheme focuses on an urban population that possesses fewer skills and may struggle to navigate the competitive job market, aiming to provide them with livelihood opportunities. This report presents an assessment of the TNUES, highlighting its objectives, implementation, issues in design and implementation, and a set of recommendations for course correction and further improvement.

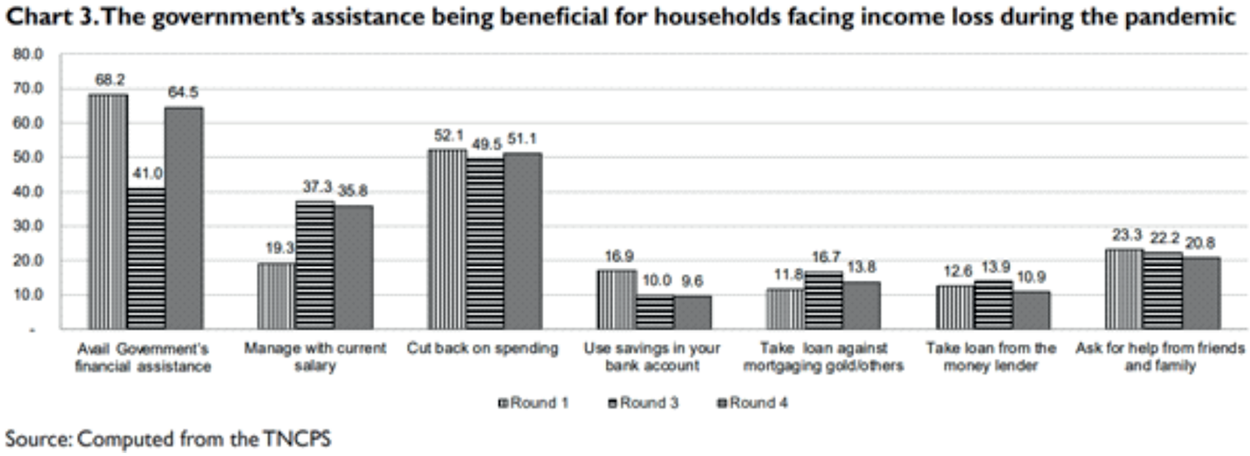
Background of the Scheme

Towards the beginning of the year 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic came as a devastating 'external shock' to the Indian economy. Subsequent lockdowns and the relaxations that followed affected both the economic conditions of the households and the behaviour with which the households responded to the impacts. To revive the economy, the governments, both the Union and the state, initiated several relief measures and stimulant packages in addition to relaxing the lockdowns.

The Tamil Nadu Covid Pulse Survey (TNCPS), a rapid response panel survey designed to take place at regular intervals of four months over the course of one year, assessed the impact of the global pandemic and the subsequent lockdown measures on a sample of approximately 13,000 households in Tamil Nadu. The TNCPS showed that a whopping 53% of the sample households faced job loss when a sudden nationwide lockdown was imposed in March 2020. This was coupled with a reduction in income and an increase in food insecurity at the household level. While the pandemic weakened in Tamil Nadu by

the end of 2020 and fewer households reported job loss (17%), the subsequent second wave created irreparable damage to the economy.

Figure 1 - Government's Assistance and its benefits



The chart presented above from the TNCPS survey projects that the governments' financial assistance was of considerable help for revival of livelihood for almost two third of the households. The 24-member committee, headed by ex-RBI Governor Dr. C Rangarajan, set up to propose measures to bring the Covid-19-battered economy of Tamil Nadu back to the growth path, has recommended to the state government to come up with an urban employment guarantee scheme on the lines of MGNREGS, increase capital expenditure by Rs. 10,000 crores and spend close to Rs 3,200 crore to support construction workers .

Initiation of the Scheme

Based on the committee's recommendations, the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme was launched, focusing on women, the elderly, and unskilled labourers who had been disproportionately affected by job losses during the pandemic. The scheme was initially implemented on a pilot basis in two zones of the Greater Chennai Corporation and one zone in rest of the 14 Corporations, seven municipalities, and 37 town panchayats across the state, as stated in the

[1] Ibid

[2] https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/rangarajan-committee-recommends-tamil-nadu-govt-to-come-up-with-urban-job-guarantee-scheme/2088489/

Government Order G.O(MS) no.69/13.1.2021 and G.O(MS) N0.9/11.1.2022. This proactive intervention aimed to provide much-needed support to vulnerable sections of the population. The scheme guidelines defined different wage rates per person-day across different kinds of urban local bodies (ULBs): Rs. 300 for town panchayats, Rs. 342 for municipalities, Rs. 363 for corporations (except for Class A Corporations – Chennai, Avadi and Coimbatore), and Rs. 382 for Class A Corporations – Chennai, Avadi and Coimbatore. By December 2022, the scheme had enrolled a significant number of beneficiaries, with 2, 04,860 persons issued Job Cards. However, the number of beneficiaries who sought or obtained jobs was less than 1% of those enrolled. The amount of work offered was also lower than anticipated, offering a lesser number of person-days of work.

Though the scheme was introduced as a measure to address the loss of livelihood in the unorganized sector due to Covid 19, the scheme was visualised as a potential urban social security programme in the lines of MGNREGS, providing livelihood options to the urban poor in the rapidly urbanizing TamilNadu. This requires, therefore, an understanding of the scope for such a long-term programmatic intervention.

The following table provides an overview of the funding support for the scheme.

Table Table 1- Per Day Wages and Fund Allocation

Urban Local Body	Wages/Person /day	Fund allocated for each ULB
Town Panchayats	Rs. 300	1 Crore
Municipalities	Rs. 342	2 Crores
Corporations (Except Class A Corporations)	Rs. 363	1.7 Crores
Class A Corporations - Chennai, Avadi and Coimbatore	Rs. 382	10 Crores for 2 Zones in GCC

Under the TNUES, various types of work were allowed to be undertaken, including Natural Resources Management (NRM), maintenance of freshwater resources, and other related activities. Desilting, jungle clearance, and tree plantation emerged as the primary activities chosen by many urban local bodies (ULBs). The implementation phases varied across districts, with the majority reporting progress from March 2022 to September 2022. Several ULBs resumed work after a gap caused due to the rainy season.

This research serves to identify gaps and challenges encountered during implementation of the TNUES and provide recommendations for necessary course corrections. The findings highlight areas for improvement, including enhancing beneficiary participation, increasing the quantum of work offered, and diversifying the types of activities undertaken. Additionally, the report suggests the need for streamlined monitoring, effective coordination, and comprehensive data management to ensure transparency and accountability.

The implementation framework of TNUES

Process tracing analysis gives insights regarding the roles and responsibilities of key personnel involved in the implementation of the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES). At the ULB level, the Executive officers served as the financial approving authorities, while the Junior Engineers and Assistant Engineers played crucial roles as ground-level supervising officers. Additionally, Mates, as defined in the scheme guidelines, contract-based Animators or field-level officers were appointed by the DMA (Directorate of Municipal Administration) and DTP (Directorate of Town Panchayat) based on the number of enrolled individuals. These Mates and Animators played a significant role as ground-level managers, responsible for informing beneficiaries about work availability, maintaining attendance sheets, and assisting engineers with scheme documentation.

During the pilot study conducted in Town Panchayats, Corporations, and Municipalities, it was observed that local administration actively engaged with local representatives to seek consensus on available public infrastructure and potential projects for implementation. The proposed projects were then

forwarded to the DTP/DMA for funding. Elected local body representatives played an active role in project execution and formed an informal mechanism for addressing the concerns of beneficiaries. However, it should be noted that not all urban local bodies adhered to this ideal framework of operation. Different pathways of operation and stakeholder engagement could be observed. In subsequent sections of this report, we will highlight the best-case scenarios identified during the study.

The following table provides an overview of the roles of different stakeholders involved in the scheme and their stake in its implementation.

Stakeholders	Responsibility
Elected Representatives	Ideating and suggesting the kind of work that can be taken up within the ULB. Also, act as informal grievance redressal functionaries. Encourage beneficiaries.
Local Administration	Creating the work proposal based on suggestions from elected members and estimating the funds for each work and submitting the proposal to the DTP/DMA.
Directorate of respective ULBs	Selecting the appropriate work projects from the ideas submitted by the administration. Allocating funds, deciding the criteria to measure work done and the modes of reporting by the town panchayat administration.
Public	Workers and beneficiaries of the scheme.

It is also to be noted that the implementation framework differs from place to place based on the kind of power dynamics that exist between the local body representatives and the administrative officials. However, the prevalence of people raising their concerns to the local body representatives in issues related to wages and other problems at the work site is observed in most places. This framework is presented here only to emphasize the roles and stakes of stakeholders considered in the study.

Rapid Assessment Method:

The assessment sought to understand issues on the supply and demand side so as to ensure that the intended outputs are achieved and also to ensure that there are frameworks in place to ensure transparency and better governance of the scheme. Further, based on meetings held with the DTP, DMA, and other implementing agencies of the scheme, it was evident that there's a need to monitor the implementation of the scheme across districts.

The exercise therefore tries to answer the following questions

1. What potential improvements can be suggested to enhance the efficacy of the scheme?
2. How can the issues identified on the supply side be addressed to ensure more effective implementation?

This rapid assessment was carried out by the State Planning Commission of Tamil Nadu with support from the Department of Town Panchayats, the Municipalities, and the Corporations. A sample survey was carried out with the support of our institutional partner Loyola College, Chennai, while the State Planning Commission's officials undertook the task of collecting qualitative information through interviews with key stakeholders and focus group discussions. This study was conducted over a period of three weeks from the second week of February to the First week of March 2023, thus reducing the externalities of time. Care was taken to ensure that the nuances of the implementation of the scheme were captured through in-depth Focus Group Discussions and unstructured interviews with all the stakeholders involved at the ground level - the beneficiaries, the town panchayat officials, and the local body representatives.

The list of ULBs identified for the conduct of the rapid assessment is detailed in the table

Table 3 - List of ULBs identified for the conduct of Rapid Assessment

Urban Local Body	Locations	
Corporations	1. Zone 4 and Zone 6 - Greater Chennai Corporation	
	2. East zone - Coimbatore Corporation	
	3. Zone 4- Tirunelveli Corporation	
Municipalities	Location	District
	1. Nellikuppam	Cuddalore district
	2. Kulithalai	Karur district
	3. Thiruthuraipoondi	Thiruvarur district
	4. Kallakurichi	Kallakurichi district
Town Panchayats	1. Edaikazhinadu	Chengalpattu District
	2. Alangayam	Tirupattur District
	3. Kambainallur	Dharmapuri district
	4. Devarshola	Nilgiris
	5. Komaralingam	Tirupur district
	6. Alanganallur	Madurai district
	7. Anandapuram	Villupuram district
	8. Manalmedu	Mayiladuthurai district
	9. Kurumbalur	Perambalur district

The initial stages of this research involved informal communication with the implementing departments, collecting secondary data on job card registrations and the number of individuals who actually worked under the scheme in the selected locations. Data on the types of jobs undertaken and budget allocations for the projects were also obtained from the DMA, DTP, and Corporations. Snowballing techniques were employed to gather secondary data, documentation, and departmental proceedings from these agencies. Process tracing was carried out to understand the flow of funds and the chain of command within the local body agencies, including the involvement of newly elected local body representatives.

To begin with, field visits were undertaken to some ULBs where a series of semi-structured discussions were conducted with multiple stakeholders. Next, a pilot field study was conducted in the Chennai Corporation and the town panchayats of Podaturpet and Edaikazhinadu in Tiruvallur and Chengalpattu districts, respectively. This pilot study, conducted in January 2023, aided in the development of a questionnaire for the large-scale survey. The objective was to understand how beneficiaries perceived the scheme, the changes it brought to their lives, and whether on-ground implementation aligned with their demand for employment. A sample survey was then conducted using a structured questionnaire to gather responses from beneficiaries across the state. Proportional stratified random sampling was employed to ensure the data collected was representative of the total number of people enrolled in the scheme.

After cleaning and validating the beneficiary data provided by the DMA, DTP, and corporations, separate line lists of potential respondents who registered for the scheme in each location were generated, maintaining separate lists for corporations, municipalities, and town panchayats. Different strata of workers and non-workers were identified, with internal divisions based on gender. The Mobile application based KoboCollect was used by the enumerators for data collection.

Table Table 4 - Sample Size across Urban Local Bodies

S.No	Urban Local Body	Samples from each ULB Category				
		Respondents: enrolled but haven't worked under TNUES		Respondents: Worked under TNUES		Total
		Female	Ma le	Female	Male	
1.	Municipalities	58	8	56	10	132
2.	Corporations	44	25	60	9	138
3.	Town Panchayats	129	22	123	22	296
Total		231	55	239	41	566
		286		280		566

From the departmental data across the state, it was evident that out of the total people enrolled for the scheme and obtained job cards, 71.5% were women. Furthermore, out of the total individuals who worked under the scheme, 88.3% were women.

For the qualitative part of the study, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with beneficiaries, and unstructured interviews were carried out with field-level officers and people's representatives. To ensure representation, an equal number of non-worked and worked beneficiaries were included in the FGDs, and a separate sub-set of questions was administered to these groups.

Information on their socio-eocnomic and demographic profile was obtained with attention to reasons for their choice of employment, issues faced and preferences for work. The data collected was then processed to identify emerging patterns

across districts and highlight best practices. The findings are presented using the framework of supply and demand, providing insights into both supply-side issues and the mismatch between the demand among urban unemployed and the design of the scheme.

Analysis Using Supply-Demand Framework

As highlighted by the then Finance Minister of the state Mr. Palanivel Thiyagarajan during one of the announcements regarding the scheme, this intervention tries to provide "wage employment for the urban poor" and tries to work on improvement of public infrastructure within the state. This intervention has a direct impact on job availability to women in the suburbs and town panchayats within the state. It also seeks to compensate for the unemployment caused due Covid induced livelihood and job loss in the short run and due to other socio-cultural reasons within the state.

Structure of the Report

The report is structured as follows:

First, we present the respondents' profile. Second, we examine the various issues related to the registration process for the scheme, including factors affecting beneficiaries' access to job opportunities and information about work availability. The third section of the analysis focuses on the experiences of beneficiaries while working under the scheme. This includes their perspectives on conditions of work and places of work, and transportation. In the fourth section, the report delves into issues related to wage payment. Finally, the supply-side issues are identified. Throughout the analysis, we incorporate relevant insights from qualitative information to provide additional context and insight. The last section of the report derives a set of recommendations for the implementing agencies based on our findings and analysis.

1

Respondents' Profile

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents from different urban local bodies. Fifty Five percent of the respondents represent the Town panchayats, 23% represent the 4 municipalities, and 21% are from the 3 Municipal corporations, including 2 Zones from Greater Chennai Corporation.

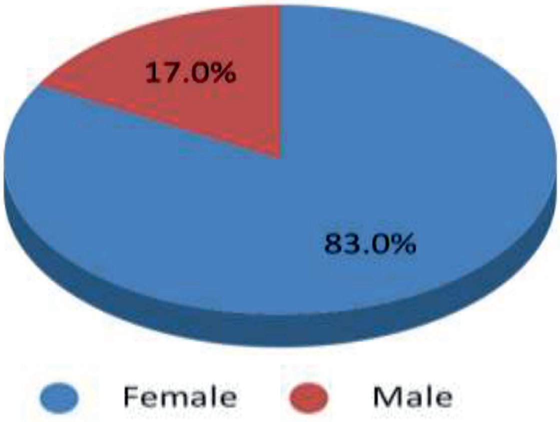
Table 5 - Distribution of Respondents from different urban local bodies

Type of ULB	ULB	Female	Male	Total	%
Corporation	Greater Chennai Corp	68	24	92	16.3
	Coimbatore Corp	20	6	26	4.6
	Tirunelveli Corp	16	4	20	3.5
	Corporation Total	104	34	138	24.4
Municipality	Nellikuppam, Cuddalore	56	8	64	11.3
	Thiruthuraipoondi, Tiruvarur	22	4	26	4.6
	Kallakurichi, Kallakurichi	19	3	22	3.9
	Kulithalai, Karur	17	3	20	3.5
Town	Municipality Total	114	18	132	23.3
Panchayat	Alangayam, Tiruppatur	15	5	20	3.5
	Edaikazhinadu, Chengelpattu	36	10	46	8.1
	Ananthapuram, Villupuram	18	4	22	3.9
	Kurumbalur, Perambalur	34	6	40	7.1
	Manalmedu, Mayiladuthurai	24	4	28	4.9
	Devarshola, Nilgiris	18	4	22	3.9
	Komaralingam, Tiruppur	23	1	24	4.2
	Kambainallur, Dharmapuri	28	2	30	5.3
	Alanganallur, Madurai	21	3	24	4.2
	Nerkkuppai, Sivagangai	18	2	20	3.5
	Sundarapandiapuram, Tenkasi	17	3	20	3.5
	Town Panchayat Total	252	44	296	52.3
	Total	470	96	566	100

Source: Sample Survey conducted for this study.

Gender

Women accounted for bulk of the demand for the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme. As Figure 2 suggests, out of the total 566 respondents, 470 (83%) were women, while 96 (17%) were men. It is important to note that this distribution does not accurately represent the actual participation of women in the workforce, as men were intentionally included in the study to ensure their perspectives on the scheme. Moreover, transgender individuals were also actively engaged in the scheme's work.



In the subsequent sections of this report, when we refer to the sample population or n, it refers solely to women workers in the sample. The perceptions and observations of male workers are provided only when relevant to the scope of the report.

Age

Table 6 - Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	Number of Respondents (N)	Total (%)
18 to 20	0	0.00
21 to 25	14	3.0
26 to 30	43	9.1
31 to 35	81	17.2
36 to 40	84	17.9
41 to 45	85	18.1
45 to 50	74	15.7
51 and above	89	18.9
Total (%)	470	100

This table includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme

The study reveals that a significant majority (69%) of the respondents fall within the age group of 31 to 50 years. Additionally, 18% of the respondents belong to the age group of above 50 years. These findings indicate that the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme primarily caters to the middle-aged population, specifically women. It therefore appears that women with care responsibilities tend to benefit disproportionately from the scheme.

Educational Profile

Table Table 7 - Educational Level of Respondents

educational Status in %	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total across ULBs
Never Been to school	17.3 (18)	32.5 (37)	26.6 (67)	26 (122)
Up to 5th Std	25 (26)	10.5 (12)	19.8 (50)	18.7 (88)
Up to 8th Std	23.1 (24)	22.8 (26)	16.7 (42)	19.6 (92)
Up to 10th Std	18.3 (19)	17.5 (20)	19.8 (50)	18.9 (89)
Up to 12th Std	6.7 (7)	12.3 (14)	9.5 (24)	9.6 (45)
Undergraduate	5.8 (6)	3.5 (4)	2.8 (7)	3.6 (17)
Post graduate	1 (1)	0 (0)	2.4 (6)	1.5 (7)
Diploma	2.8 (3)	1 (1)	2.4 (6)	2.1 (10)
Total	100 (104)	100 (114)	100 (252)	100 (470)

This table includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme

A significant proportion (83%) of the respondents have studied less than the 10th standard. The data further shows that almost 26% of the respondents have never been to school, indicating that the majority of the beneficiaries are educationally disadvantaged. The TNUES plays a crucial role in providing livelihood opportunities for these individuals who might face difficulties in finding employment elsewhere due to the absence of basic education. Interestingly, the data also

"We don't have any big factories in our locality, so even if we have completed the 12th standard, we don't have options for qualification-related work. The only nearby factory is a Vermicelli (semiya) factory, where wages are usually low, and the factory remains closed during summer months due to water scarcity. With no opportunities to seek employment outside our area, we find this scheme particularly useful, especially during the summer months."

- Respondent, Nerkuppai TP, Sivagangai

indicate that 16% of women who have studied 12th standard or above are engaged in the TNUES. This could be attributed to factors such as societal restrictions on women's employment outside their locality, domestic commitments, and the flexibility offered by the scheme to balance family responsibilities with work. Focus group discussions (FGDs) in various locations too echo such sentiments. For Instance, in Edaikazhinadu, educated women often have to travel long distances, approximately 90 km round trip, to nearby cities like Pondicherry in search of employment opportunities aligned with their qualifications. Additionally, women without college degrees typically receive lower wages, even in these neighbouring cities. As a result, their preference is to earn a stable income while managing family responsibilities from the comfort of their homes, making the TNUES a valuable livelihood support scheme for them.

The importance of the scheme for such women is also evident from the fact that almost 25% of the participants who had enrolled in the scheme are the primary bread winners for their families.

It is important to note that 55 (11.7%) women across all ULBs who were primary bread winners in the family have registered for the TNUES job but could not get employment opportunity. This percentage was high in Town Panchayats with 38 (15.1%) of the registered 180 women aspirants in TPs and 46 (10.5%) in Municipalities.

The highest percentage of households which has only one woman working is found in Town Panchayats (18.3%), followed by Municipalities (14%) and Corporations (9.6%). Through our analysis of the focus group discussions (FGDs), it has become evident that many of these women have limited or no formal education and possess minimal technical skills. Consequently, they predominantly engage in manual labour as their primary means of employment. For these households, the Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES) plays a pivotal

> "There is a sense of safety because we work in groups and are usually working along the roadside and in public view. There is less danger from wild animals, and the work timing is also relatively better than the estate jobs. As women, we prefer this work to estate jobs."
>
> - Beneficiary, Devarshola Town Panchayat

role as their sole source of income.

As expressed by participants from the Devarshola Town Panchayat of Nilgiris, the majority of the working population in this Town Panchayat relies heavily on 'coolie' (daily wages) contract jobs for their livelihood. However, recent trends indicate limited job opportunities available within these estates. Additionally, there has been an increase in wild animal attacks in the region. The reported daily wages for men in these jobs is INR 800, while for women, it is INR 500. Although the wages in TNUES are comparatively lower than the market wages in the region, the less number of days during which such employment is available has made TNUES an important means of additional income support for women in this area. Further, women participants in town panchayats often work in agriculture. Decline in employment availability in agriculture tends to be partly compensated by work offered under TNUES.

Community and Gender based distribution of respondents

Looking at the caste profile, 45.8% of the respondents enrolled belong to scheduled caste (SC) households (Table 29 presented in the annexure). Among the population that worked under the scheme, the participation of Scheduled caste population was again high with 23.7% among which 20.1% were women and 3.6% are men.

Before being enrolled to work in TNUES, I used to work as Domestic Worker at individual houses. When I got work in TNUES, I opted to work here as the salary was little high. In GCC we were given storm water drain desilting work. After seeing us doing in the desilting work, the houses where I worked denied to take back when there is no work in offering in GCC as I was see working in the gutter.

- A women beneficiary from Zone IV of Greater Chennai Corporation.

The next highest participation is from the Most Backward Classes (26.9%). Clearly, the scheme has greatly supported the women from lower castes, the Scheduled Castes and Most Backward Classes.

Marital Status and Family Income

Table 9 - Marital Status of Beneficiaries (%)

Marital Status	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBs
Married	93.3(97)	78.1 (89)	79.8 (201)	82.3 (387)
Widowed	3.9(4)	19.3 (22)	17.9 (45)	15.1 (71)
Divorced	1(1)	0.9 (1)	0.8 (2)	0.9 (4)
Deserted	0 (0)	0.9 (1)	0.4 (1)	0.4 (2)
Separated	1.9 (2)	0.9 (1)	1.2 (3)	1.3 (6)
Total	100 (104)	100 (114)	100 (252)	100 (470)
This table includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme				

Almost 18% of women registered are single women, who are widowed, separated, or deserted. Some of these women are supported by their extended families. The societal pressures of being single prevent these women from migrating out of their locality. The FGD participants expressed that the TNUES scheme not only provides them with employment but also contributes to their sense of agency, and economic empowerment. Having a workplace to go to allows them to get better control over their lives.

Occupation:

The primary occupation of women who have registered for the TNUES along with those have got employment under the scheme is presented in Table 11

Table 10 - Primary Occupation of Beneficiaries

Primary Occupation of Beneficiaries	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBs
Agriculture	2.9 (3)	26.3 (30)	29 (73)	106 (22.6)
Industry	0 (0)	3.5 (4)	0.4 (1)	5 (1.1)
Retail	1 (1)	0.9 (1)	2 (5)	7 (1.5)
Entrepreneur	1 (1)	0 (0)	0.8 (2)	3 (0.6)

Self-employed	11.5 (12)	3.5 (4)	4.4 (11)	27 (5.7)
Others	4.8 (5)	15.8 (18)	15.9 (40)	63 (13.4)
Wasn't part of workforce	78.8 (82)	50 (57)	47.6 (120)	259 (55.1)
Total	100 (104)	100 (114)	100 (252)	470 (100)
This table includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme				

The primary occupation refers to the main source of employment that an individual engages in for at least 6 months in a year. Agricultural sector is the major employer of the sample respondents (22.6%). This includes 3 women from Tirunelveli Corporation. Though the locations are demarcated as urban local bodies, agriculture continues to be the main employer in these ULBs. Only 1.1% (5) of the 470 women respondents are engaged by industries. This could also be read along with the literacy status of the respondents where a significant portion (83%) of the respondents have studied less than the 10th standard and 25.96% of the respondents have never been to school. But even with 16% of women who have studied 12th standard or above, the participation in industrial workforce is only 1.1%.

Importantly, 55.1% of the respondents were not in paid employment anywhere. TNUES, therefore, is the main source of employment. This indicates that the scheme has on the one hand contributed to increasing women's participation in the workforce while it has addressed uneven employment availability in agriculture.

2

Access to work opportunities

This section focuses on knowledge dissemination, awareness creation, and enabling workers to enrol in the scheme. The aim is to assess whether the beneficiaries have enrolled for work with sufficient knowledge about the scheme.

Knowledge about the kind of work

Table 10 - Knowledge about the kind of work while applying

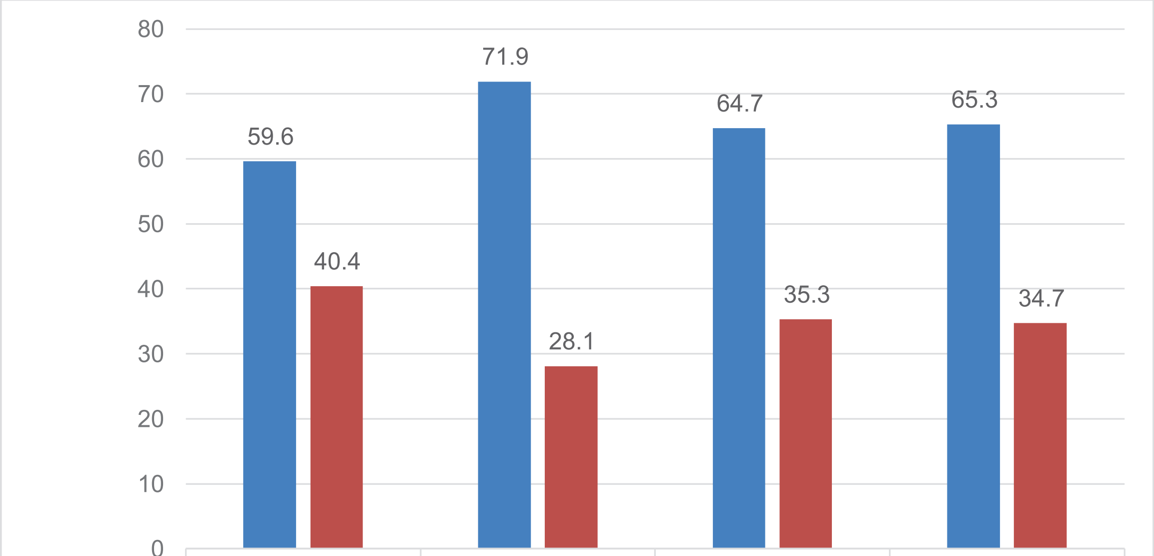
Applied for the TNUES Job card understanding the kind of work to be offered	corporation	municipality	Town Panchayat	Total across ULBs
Yes (%)	59.6 (62)	71.9 (82)	64.7 (163)	65.3 (307)
No (%)	40.4 (42)	28.1 (32)	35.3 (89)	34.7 (163)
Total (%)	100 (104)	100 (114)	100 (252)	100 (470)

This table includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme

Majority of the respondents (65.3%) have applied for the TNUES job card, having basic ideas about the scheme, demonstrating a high level of interest and awareness in seeking employment through the scheme. However, it is worth noting that a considerable percentage of respondents (34.7%) have applied for the TNUES job card without fully understanding the basics of the scheme. This highlights a gap in information dissemination between the implementing agency and the beneficiaries. Addressing this gap becomes crucial to ensure that more individuals in need can fully comprehend the benefits and provisions of the scheme.

Additionally, it is important to note that the information gap is surprisingly higher in Corporation zones. In fact, our qualitative research corroborated this data. In the Corporation areas (Coimbatore and Chennai), the information about the scheme and the kind of work offered isn't sufficiently publicized. Instead, a select group of individuals were employed for prolonged periods. This suggests a lack of transparency and inequitable distribution of employment opportunities within the Corporation areas, which could lead to a sense of exclusion among the potential beneficiaries.

Figure 5 – Knowledge about the kind of work



	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	All ULBs
Aware	59.6	71.9	64.7	65.3
Not aware	40.4	28.1	35.3	34.7

This figure includes all the women respondents both worke d and not worked in the scheme

Efforts should be made to improve the dissemination of information about the scheme, ensuring that potential beneficiaries have access to comprehensive and clear explanation of its objectives, eligibility criteria, and benefits. This can be achieved through targeted awareness campaigns, community outreach programs, and collaborations with local organizations to increase awareness and understanding.

Knowledge about per day wages

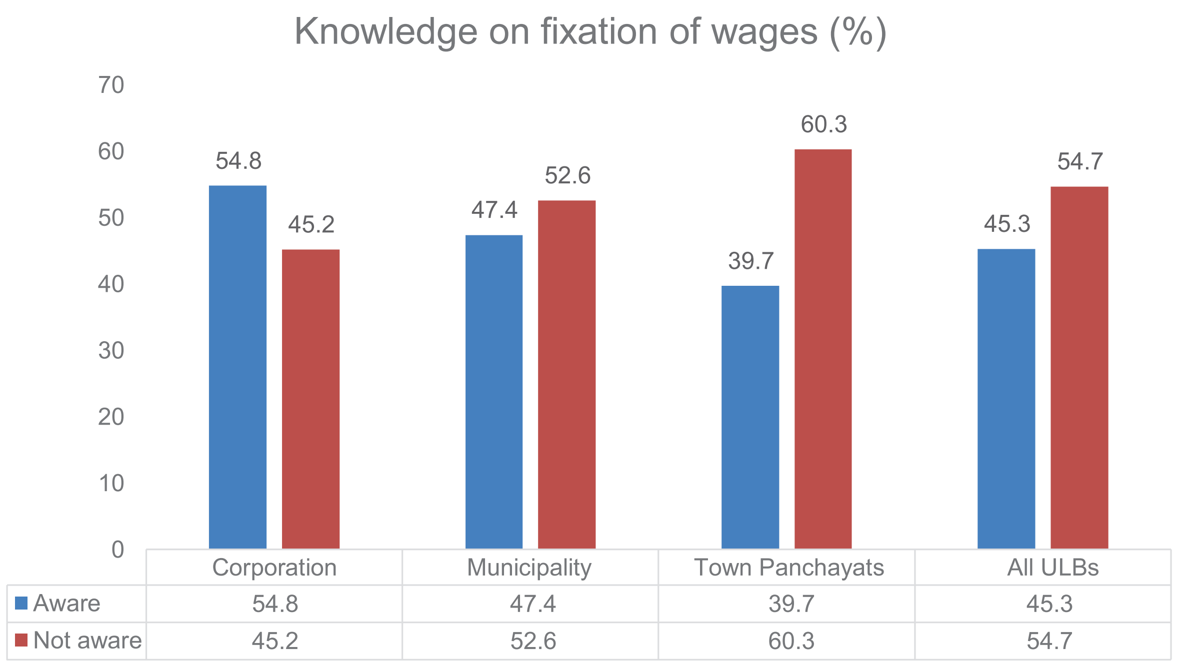
Ideally people make employment choices based on the monetary benefits of the

said employment. This section maps the levels of awareness of sample respondents about this dimension across ULBs.

Table 11 - Knowledge about the promised wages while applying (in %)

Aware of per day wages when I applied for the TNUES Job card	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total across ULBs
Yes (N)	12.1 (57)	11.5 (54)	18.9 (89)	42.6 (200)
No (N)	10 (47)	12.8 (60)	34.7 (163)	57.4 (270)
Total (N)	22.1 (104)	24.3 (114)	53.6 (252)	100.00 (470)
This table includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme				

Figure 4 - Knowledge on fixation of wages



This figure includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme

The data highlights that a significant proportion of the respondents (57.4%) who have applied for TNUES job cards were unaware of the per day wages offered by the scheme. This indicates a lack of effective information dissemination and suggests that many applicants may not have a clear understanding that this is a livelihood assistance intervention and not a full-time job opportunity. It is crucial to address this gap in information to ensure that individuals have accurate information about the wages they can expect from participating in the scheme.

However, despite the lack of information regarding the per day wages, it is interesting to note that more than half of the respondents have still applied for the scheme. This indicates a strong demand for employment opportunities, particularly in the Town Panchayats. This highlights the fact that there are considerable number of women in urban and semi-urban regions in Tamil Nadu who are willing and able to work irrespective of the wage rates, provided the employment is accessible given their constraints.

3

Issues during the phase of work

This section delves into the various issues faced by respondents in the course of their work under the TNUES scheme. It encompasses their opinions regarding the difficulty of the assigned tasks, their ability to complete the allocated work, and their satisfaction with the measurement of work done. These aspects are particularly important as the TNUES scheme remunerates workers based on the achievement of assigned tasks, with specific standards set to measure their performance.

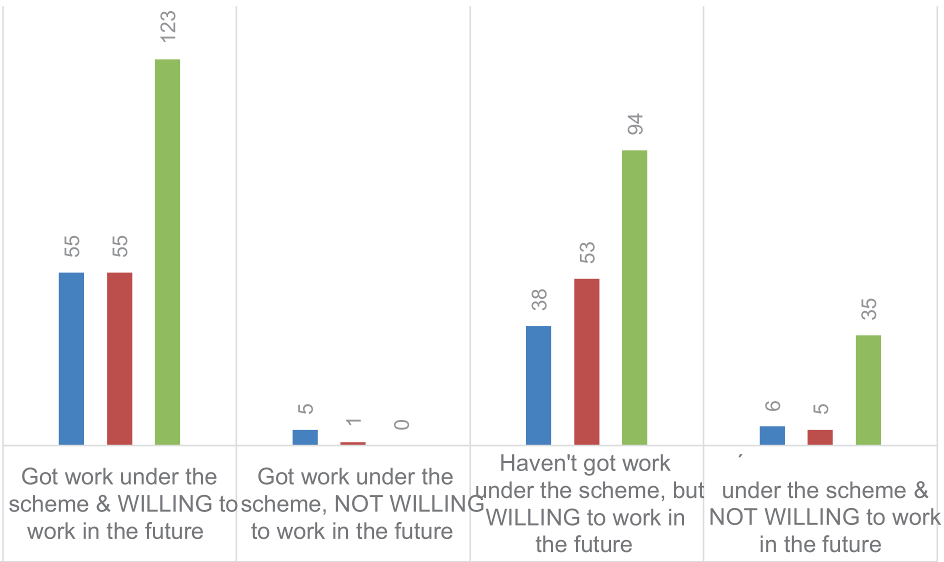
Willingness to work under the scheme

Table Table 12 - Opinion on Working under the Scheme

Willingness to work	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	All ULBs
GOT WORK under the scheme & WILLING to work in the future	52.9 (55)	48.2 (55)	48.8 (123)	49.6 (233)
GOT WORK under the scheme, NOT WILLING to work in the future	4.8 (5)	0.9 (1)	0 (0)	1.3 (6)
HAVEN'T GOT work under the scheme, but WILLING to work in the future	36.5 (38)	46.5 (53)	37.3 (94)	39.4 (185)
HAVEN'T GOT work under the scheme & NOT WILLING to work in the future	5.8 (6)	4.4 (5)	13.9 (35)	9.8 (46)
Total	100 (104)	100 (114)	100 (252)	100 (470)
This table includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme				

Across all regions, a substantial percentage of respondents who have received work under the TNUES scheme expressed their willingness to work in the future. This indicates a positive outlook towards the scheme and suggests that the work provided has been satisfactory for many beneficiaries. This also suggests a need to create more such job avenues. The highest willingness to work in the future is observed in both town panchayats and municipalities, where 97.1% of respondents who have received work are willing to continue working. This suggests that the scheme has resonated well with individuals in these areas, as the job opportunities outside agriculture is very limited in nature in these slowly urbanizing spaces.

Figure 5 - Opinion on Working in TNUES



	Got work under the scheme & WILLING to work in the future	Got work under the scheme, NOT WILLING to work in the future	Haven't got work under the scheme, but WILLING to work in the future	under the scheme & NOT WILLING to work in the future
Corporation	55	5	38	6
Municipality	55	1	53	5
Town Panchayat	123	0	94	35

This figure includes all the women respondents both worked and not worked in the scheme

It is encouraging to note that a significant number of respondents who have not yet received work under the scheme still express their willingness to work in the future. This highlights the continued demand for employment opportunities and the potential impact the scheme can have on addressing unemployment in urban areas. In many ULB, knowing that the research team is holding discussions with

the beneficiaries a large number of card holders gathered and requested that more work days should be given to them.

However, a small share of respondents who have received work under the scheme report to not willing to work in the future. The percentage however, is relatively low. Based on data gathered from focus group discussions (FGDs), some respondents perceive a difference regarding the wages announced and actual wages paid to the respondents. In some ULBs the respondents being paid as low as INR 70 for a day's work. Though the payment is based on the amount of work undertaken, participants opined that they deserve to be paid more. Second, some have experienced delays in receiving their wages for prolonged periods. The delayed payment of wages has had a negative impact on the participants' trust and satisfaction with the scheme. This finding underscores the importance of ensuring timely and accurate payment of wages to the beneficiaries.

Days worked

The following Table 14 presents the number of days offered to the respondents by the urban local bodies.

Table 14 - Number of Days Worked

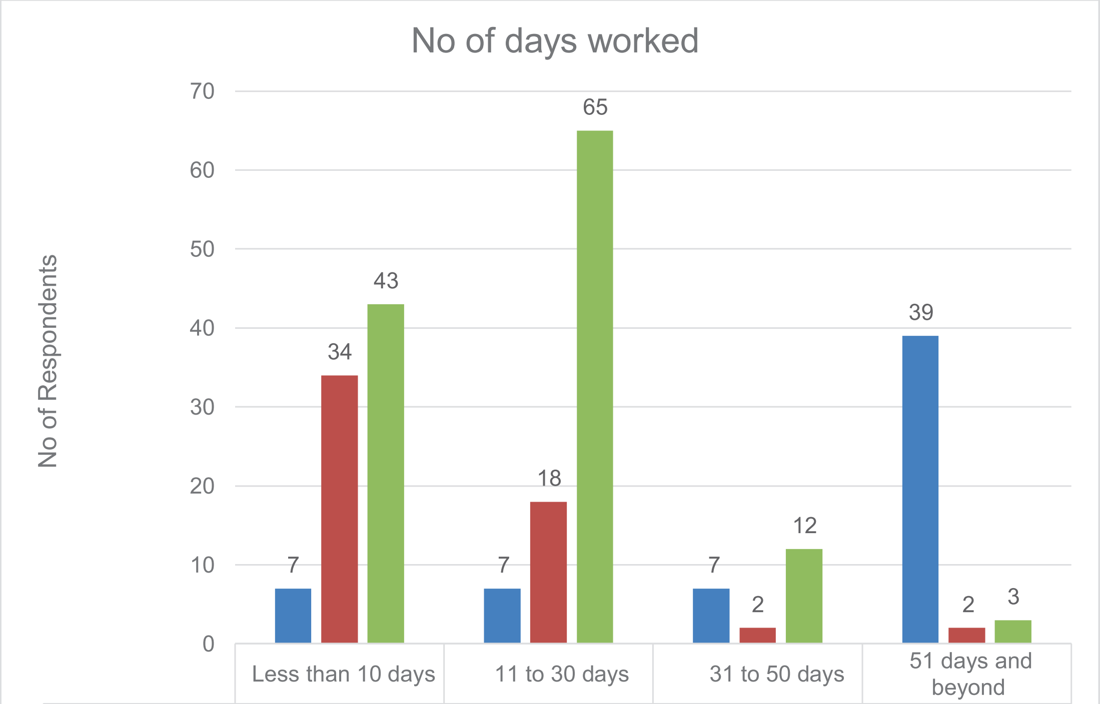
No of Days Worked	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBs
Less than 10 days	11.7 (7)	60.7 (34)	35 (43)	35.1 (84)
11 to 30 days	11.7 (7)	32.1 (18)	52.8 (65)	37.7 (90)
31 to 50 days	11.7 (7)	3.6 (2)	9.8 (12)	8.8 (21)
More than 51 days	65 (39)	3.6 (2)	2.4 (3)	18.4 (44)
Total	100 (60)	100 (56)	100 (123)	100 (239)

This table includes only women respondents worked in the scheme

While a majority of beneficiaries (65%) in the corporation areas have worked for 51 days, workers in Municipality and Town Panchayat areas have on an average worked for fewer days. 92.9% of the workers in municipalities and 87.8% of the workers in Town Panchayats have received less than 30 days of work respectively. And even among those who got less than 30 days of work, 60.7% and 35% of the workers received less than 10 days of work in municipalities and Town Panchayats respectively.

In many Municipal Corporations and Town Panchayats, due to the heavy demand for work and limited projects in hand, the officials have provided work opportunities on a rotation basis for the registered workers. The team that was given work on Monday works till the end of the week and a new team is given the work the following week. While this helped to broad base employment opportunities, it reduced the number of days of employment provided to each beneficiary.

Figure 6 - Number of Days Worked Under TNUES



	Less than 10 days	11 to 30 days	31 to 50 days	51 days and beyond
Corporation	7	7	7	39
Municipality	34	18	2	2
Town Panchayat	43	65	12	3

This figure includes only women respondents who worked in the scheme

The insight provided by the elected councillors during the focus group discussion further explained the cause of higher retention of workers in corporations. The information regarding the availability of work was not shared widely and a select group of workers are continuously informed about the availability of work and they continued to get work. This finding highlights the need for transparency, equal access, and fair implementation of the TNUES scheme across all ULBs. Efforts should be made to ensure that job opportunities are accessible to all eligible beneficiaries.

> "The animator knows us all; she usually travels to our villages and informs us about the scheme. She's there in the field to record our attendance and usually helps us with any salary-related doubts. Overall, she's really helpful."
>
> Beneficiary, Komaralingam P, Tiruppur.

Communication about work availability

Communication regarding the availability of work is vital for the beneficiaries who have been registered and waiting. When intimated sufficiently in advance, registered members can schedule their other work so that they can avail of work under TNUES. The following table presents the details of the time of intimation.

Table 14 - Communication timeframe across ULBs

Intimated about work available (in %)	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBs
while completing the previous day's work	23.3 (14)	14.3 (8)	17.1 (21)	18 (43)
Just the previous evening/night	25 (15)	30.4 (17)	15.4 (19)	21.3 (51)
2 days earlier	33.3 (20)	35.7 (20)	43.1 (53)	38.9 (93)
5 days earlier	10 (6)	16.1 (9)	23.6 (29)	18.4 (44)
Others	8.3 (5)	3.6 (2)	0.8 (1)	3.3 (8)
Total	100 (60)	100 (56)	100 (123)	100 (239)

This table includes only women respondents worked in the scheme

A longer notice period can have several advantages, such as giving beneficiaries the opportunity to arrange transportation, coordinate with family obligations, and allocate their time effectively. More than 39.3% of the respondents report to have been informed about availability of work only the previous day. This poses problems for them.

Town panchayats have a higher percentage of beneficiaries (67.5%) receiving more than 2 days' notice or earlier compared to municipalities and corporations (55.4% and 51.7% respectively). During the Focus Group Discussions, it was highlighted by numerous beneficiaries that they could have worked for a greater number of days if they had received prior information. Furthermore, it became evident that there is a noticeable lag in reaching beneficiaries who have limited access to digital or telephone connectivity. Interestingly, it was noted that mates and animators in the Town Panchayat regions demonstrated greater efficiency in disseminating information to beneficiaries compared to officials in the Corporation or Municipalities. This emphasizes the need to strengthen human mediation in the two categories of ULBs. The recognition of the digital connectivity gap highlights the challenges faced by beneficiaries who have limited access to technology, hindering their ability to receive timely updates and participate fully in the program.

The commendable performance of Mates and animators in the Town Panchayat regions in effectively passing on information to beneficiaries suggests the potential benefits of having dedicated personnel in similar roles within the Corporation and Municipalities. These individuals can serve as vital communication channels, bridging the gap between the program officials and beneficiaries. Their presence would facilitate the efficient dissemination of job-related information, ensure beneficiaries are adequately informed, and enable them to make the necessary preparations.

Type of work

Ponds and Drainage desilting work was the major works carried out by the ULBs. Eighty one (80.8%) percent of the respondents have been engaged in desilting work. The next highest type of work offered was Tree plantation, park maintenance and Jungle Clearance.

Table Table 15 - Responses on Type of Work

Type of Works Undertaken	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBs
Tree plantation/park maintenance/Jungle Clearance	17.6 (42)	9.6 (23)	20.9 (50)	48.1 (115)
Rain water harvesting structure	7.9 (19)	6.7 (16)	18.4 (44)	33.1 (79)
Pond/ drainage desilting	16.3 (39)	18.8 (45)	45.6(109)	80.8 (193)
Micro Compost	0.8 (2)	1.3 (3)	0	2.1 (5)
Road / Platform / walkway	10 (24)	5.9 (14)	15.9 (38)	31.8 (76)
Any Other	0	0	0.8 (2)	0.8 (2)
Total	126	101	243	470
This table includes only women respondents worked in the scheme. More than one response				

It is worth noting that a smaller percentage of beneficiaries in all types of ULBs were engaged in tasks related to road, platform, and walkway construction. During the FGDs, TP officials highlighted that women workers from these ULBs may face challenges in undertaking such heavy manual labour. This can lead to lower productivity when they are assigned to these types of job tasks.

Based on the provided data and the insights from the FGDs, it appears that while beneficiaries actively participate in water conservation and management tasks, there may be some limitations and challenges when it comes to assigning them to construction-related activities. These observations emphasize the importance of considering the skills, physical capabilities, and training needs of workers to ensure optimal productivity and successful work completion.

> "Women here are used to 'thoppu velai' (farm labor, as they call it in the region), and when we ask them to carry cement-mixtures in bonds to construction sites, they find it hard to learn and accomplish the task. We have learned that we cannot train workers in a completely new job, especially when it is harder than their usual tasks. That's why it took time to complete projects related to the construction of side-platforms on roads."
>
> \- Official, Komaralingam TP, Tiruppur

Working hours per day

Understanding the distribution of working hours can help in assessing the workload and productivity of beneficiaries as well as design working periods better.

Table 16 - Work Timings across ULBs

Working Hours Per Day	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBSs
Less than 5 hours	5 (3)	3.6 (2)	3.3 (4)	3.8 (9)
6 to 8 hours	83.3 (50)	73.2 (41)	83.7 (103)	81.2 (194)
9 hours and beyond	11.7 (7)	23.2 (13)	13 (16)	15.1 (36)
Total	100 (60)	100 (56)	100 (123)	100 (239)

This table includes only women respondents worked in the scheme

The highest percentage of beneficiaries across all ULBs (81.17%) worked for 6 to 8 hours per day. This indicates that the majority of beneficiaries across ULBs completed their assigned tasks within this timeframe. The percentages of beneficiaries working less than 5 hours per day were relatively low across all ULBs. This implies that a small proportion of beneficiaries completed their tasks in a shorter timeframe. However, a notable percentage of beneficiaries (15.06%) worked for 9 hours and beyond per day. This suggests that a section of beneficiaries may have more extensive or time-consuming tasks, requiring them to put in additional hours to complete their assignments. It's important to note that the work done is calculated based on the completion of the allocated tasks and not on the actual time spent working.

Difficulty level of allocated work

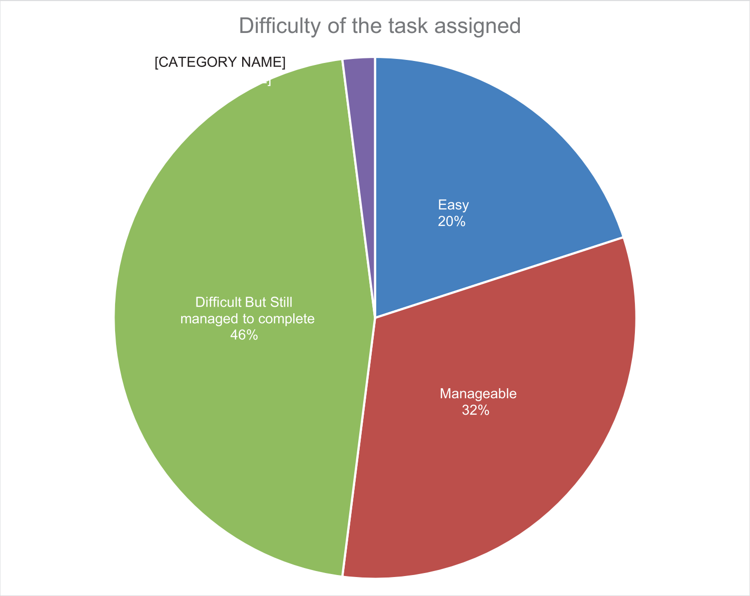
Table Table 17 - Difficulty Level of Work Assigned

How would you rate the difficulty of the work assigned	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBs
Easy	6.7 (4)	32.1 (18)	22 (27)	20.5 (49)
Manageable	18.3 (11)	41.1 (23)	34.2 (42)	31.8 (76)
Difficult still managed to complete	75 (45)	23.2 (13)	42.3 (52)	46 (110)
Difficult and Unable to complete work	0 (0)	3.6 (2)	1.6 (2)	1.7 (4)
Total	100 (60)	100 (56)	100 (123)	100 (239)

This table includes only women respondents worked in the scheme

More than 52% of beneficiaries rated the work assigned to them as easy and manageable. However, 46% report the work to be difficult and a negligible share reporting that they are not able to complete on account of the difficulty.

Figure 7 - Difficulty Level of Work Assigned Across ULBs



This figure includes only women respondents who worked in the scheme

This suggests that most beneficiaries, regardless of the ULB category, were able to complete their tasks, indicating a satisfactory level of task manageability overall. But it is important to note that across majority of the ULBs the beneficiaries have not received full day wages since they have not completed the task assigned for the day. It can be also be inferred that they are facing difficulty in completing the task but do not want to state it because of the fear that work may be denied.

"You have to understand that the clay soil isn't easy to work on. We clear the silt on one part of the river bank today, and even if it rains a little, the soil becomes cloggy, making it hard to work on the next day. So, it is obvious that a group which consists of elderly women usually performs poorly when compared to a group full of younger women. The work is hard to complete, it is hard for many of us."

Beneficiary, Manalmedu TP

Insights from the FGDs also indicate that several beneficiaries prefer lowering the quantum of work to be finished in a working day.

Travel for work

One of the major elements of employment schemes like TNUES or MGNREGS is the availability of work within their neighbourhood or habitation. Most beneficiaries in all ULBs (ranging from 76. 7% to 98.2%) reported that they were assigned work close to their place of residence. This minimized the need for travel to other locations.

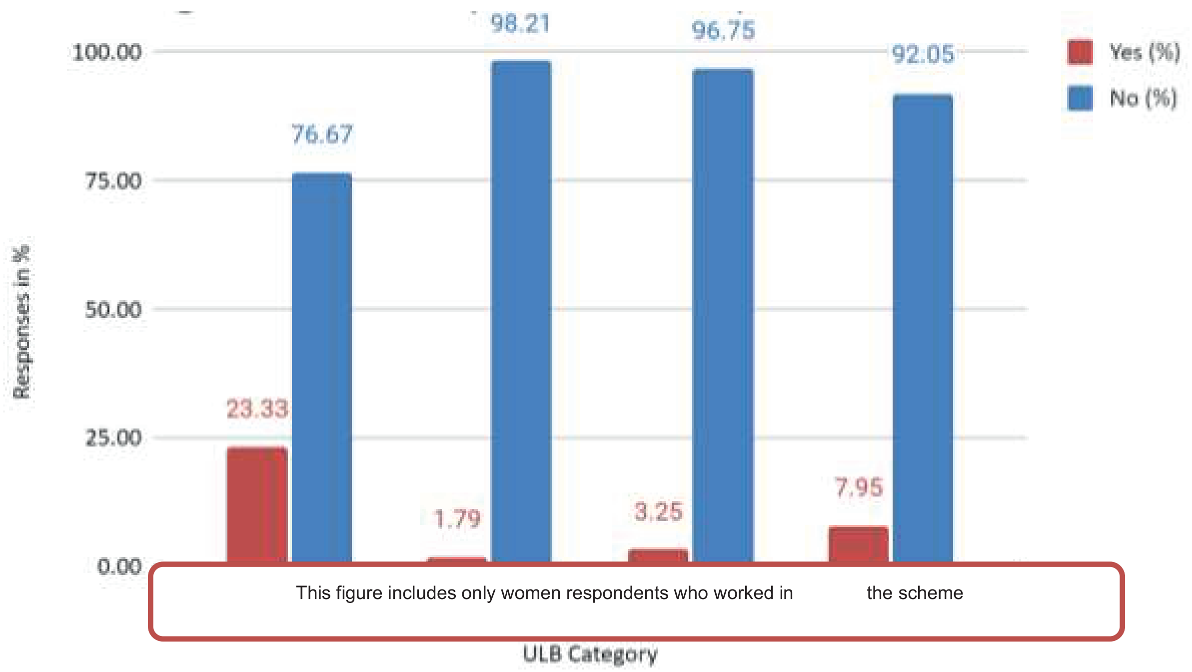
Table 18 - Assigned to do work outside Respondent's locality

Assigned to do work outside Respondent's locality to TNUES work	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total Across ULBs
Yes	23.3 (14)	1.8 (1)	3.3 (4)	8 (19)
No	76.7 (46)	98.2 (55)	96.8 (119)	92.1 (220)
Total	100.00 (60)	100.00 (56)	100.00 (123)	100 (239)

This table includes only women respondents worked in the scheme

There is a notable variation in the percentage of beneficiaries' assigned work outside their locality across the different ULBs. The municipalities had the lowest percentage of beneficiaries who were assigned work outside their locality (1.79%), while the Corporation had the highest (23.33%). This difference may be due to the nature of projects and the availability of local employment opportunities within each ULB category. For Instance, the beneficiaries in Tirunelveli had to travel outside their locality to carry out pond desilting.

Figure 8 - Assigned to do work outside Respondents' locality



Those who had to travel some distance to work faced challenges with commuting.

Arrangement for Transport

Beneficiaries across all ULB divisions reported arranging transport themselves. They either used their own means or arranged shared transportation with fellow beneficiaries when assigned to work outside their usual place of living. Some workers report that they are not allowed to carry their work tools in public buses, despite travel being free for women. Hence, they had to arrange small load vehicles to transport them from their locality to the work place. The workers claimed to have spent around Rs. 50 per day for this transport.

This information emphasizes the need to consider transportation logistics and support for beneficiaries participating in the TNUES especially when they must travel outside their usual place of living and when they had to carry tools for work. This can help improve the efficiency and convenience of beneficiaries' participation in the scheme and potentially reduce the burden of transportation costs on the beneficiaries themselves.

Amenities at workplace

Data from Table 20 emphasize the significance of facilities like washrooms, water availability, and break time in attracting more individuals to join TNUES. The nature of the work, which involves tasks related to public infrastructure like lakes, ponds, drainage lines, roads, and parks, requires access to these basic amenities to ensure a conducive working environment.

Table   Table 19 - Amenities at Workplace

Will provision of facilities like wash rooms, water availability and some break time encourage many others in your locality to join the scheme? (in %)	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total
Yes	88.3 (53)	98.2 (55)	92.7 (114)	92.9 (222)
No	11.7 (7)	1.8 (1)	7.3 (9)	7.1 (17)
Total	100 (60)	100 (56)	100 (123)	100.00 (239)

Most respondents agreed that improved workplace facilities like wash rooms

Most respondents agreed that improved workplace facilities like wash rooms along with better working environment is likely to induce more women to join work under this scheme.

It is important to consider the specific needs and concerns of female beneficiaries, as they may face additional challenges when the workspaces lack basic amenities. Insufficient facilities like washrooms and feeding spaces can disproportionately affect women's workforce participation and well-being. Providing these amenities can enhance the overall experience of female beneficiaries, and encourage more women to join the scheme. In some of the FGDs, women did state that lack of toilet access was a problem, especially during menstruation.

4

Payment Issues and Continued Preference for TNUES

This section aims to examine the process of wage payment after the completion of a day's tasks by workers under the TNUES scheme. It explores the timing of wage disbursement, potential wage variations across ULBs, and identifies other factors such as banking and administrative delays that can impact wage remittance and subsequently affect the participation of workers in the scheme.

Per day wages received

Wages play a crucial role in the success and impact of the scheme. The scheme is implemented to provide income support and livelihood opportunities to vulnerable and economically disadvantaged sections of the population. Fair and adequate wages ensure that the beneficiaries can meet their basic needs and improve their living standards, contributing to poverty reduction. For this section, municipalities and corporations are clubbed together as the wage slabs are common to both.

Table 20 - Wages Received per Day in Corporations and Municipalities

Wages Receive / day		Corporations GCC and Coimbatore	Tirunelveli Corporation	Municipality	Total
	Mandated Wage I	INR 382	INR 363	INR 342	
less than 200		0.9 (1)	0	6.0 (7)	6.9 (8)
201 - 250		0.9 (1)	0	6.0 (7)	6.9 (8)
251 - 300		6.0 (7)	0	11.2 (13)	17.2 (20)
301 350		25.0 (29)	0	24.1 (28)	49.1 (57)
351 and above		10.3 (12)	8.6 (10)		19.0 (22)
Not received the wages as on survey day				0.9 (1)	0.9 (1)
Total		43.1 (50)	8.6 (10)	48.3	100 (116)

The per day wages received by the workers in Corporations and Municipalities tends to be as low as Rs. 125 in Kallakurichi municipality. Seven (6.9) percent of workers have received less than Rs. 200. A similar share of workers received between Rs. 201 to Rs. 250. Two third (68.1%) of the respondents received more than Rs. 301 per day which roughly corresponds to the mandated wages rates. This includes all the respondents from Tirunelveli Corporation who have received more than Rs. 350 as wages. This also implies that one third of the respondents have received less than Rs. 300 per day as wages. In Thiruthuraipoondi Municipality all the workers have received above Rs. 320 as per day wages while a majority received the full day wages of Rs. 342.

According to Table 22, In the Town Panchayat, one third of the beneficiaries (34.1%) received wages below 200 per day.

Table 21 - Wages Received per Day in Town Panchayats

Wages Received Per day (Prescribed wages Rs. 300 per day)	Percentage (Respondents)
less than 200	34.1 (42)
201 250	35.8 (44)
251 300	28.5 (35)
Not received the wages until the survey day	1.6 (2)
Total	100 (123)

The lowest wages received by a worker was Rs. 70 in Sundarapandiyapuram Town Panchayat in Tenkasi and Ananthapuram in Villupuram District. Another one third (35.8%) of the beneficiaries have received Rs. 200 to Rs. 250. This suggests that a substantial portion of the workforce engaged in TNUES activities in Town Panchayats is compensated at a lower wage rate. The extent to which this is due to the amount of work actually undertaken by the workers is not clear.

There were five workers from Tirunelveli corporation who have claimed that they have worked more number of days and they were paid wages only for a very few number of days.

It is therefore crucial to ensure that the wage structure under the TNUES scheme aligns with its objective of providing livelihood opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Providing reasonable wages for work done under the employment scheme acknowledges the dignity of labour. It helps in discouraging exploitative labour practices and promotes a sense of self-worth and respect among the beneficiaries. Regular monitoring and evaluation of wage levels may help ensure fairness and address any potential disparities.

Time delay in receiving wages

A key objective of social security interventions like TNUES is to alleviate poverty.

Timely payment ensures that the workers are not pushed further into poverty due to delayed wages, which can lead to a vicious cycle of debt and financial instability. These workers belong to vulnerable sections of society and rely on these wages to support themselves and their families.

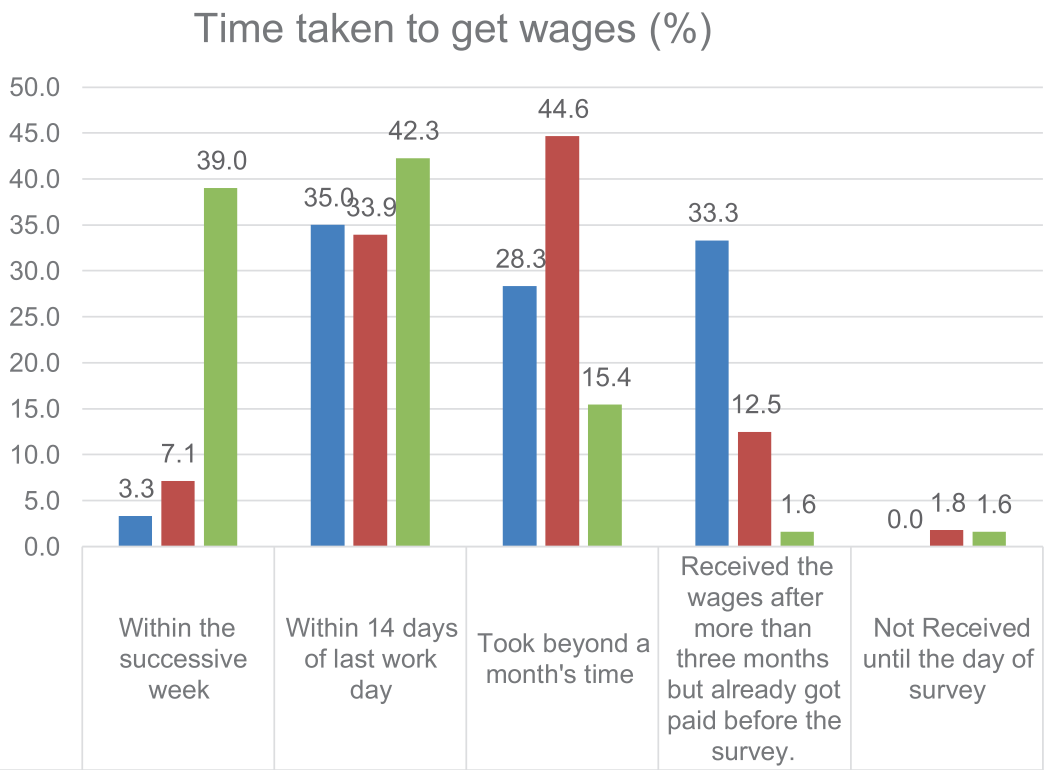
A considerable proportion of sample workers across all ULBs (61.1%) received their wages within 14 days of their last work day. The scheme guidelines stipulate that that the workers are paid within a maximum of 15 days.

Table 22 - Wages Received per Day in Town Panchayats

Time taken to get wages	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total
Within the successive week	3.3 (2)	7.1 (4)	39 (48)	22.6 (54)
Within 14 days of last work day	35 (21)	33.9 (19)	42.3 (52)	38.5 (92)
More than a month	28.3 (17)	44.6 (25)	15.4 (19)	25.5 (61)
Received the wages after more than three months but already got paid befor e the survey.	33.3 (20)	12.5 (7)	1.6 (2)	12.1 (29)
Not Received till date of survey	0.0	1.8 (1)	1.6 (2)	1.3 (3)
Total % (N)	100 (60)	100(56)	100 (123)	100 (239)

For 25.5% workers, it took more than a month to receive their wages credited to their account. Three workers have shared that they have not received any wages until the day of the survey. Twenty-nine respondents mentioned that they received the wages after more than 3 months. In Chennai and Coimbatore many have claimed that they got their wages credited after 2 months.

Figure 9 - Time Taken in receiving wages



	Within the successive week	Within 14 days of last work day	Took beyond a month's time	Received the wages after more than three months but already got paid before the survey.	Not Received until the day of survey
Corporation	3.3	35.0	28.3	33.3	0.0
Municipality	7.1	33.9	44.6	12.5	1.8
Town Panchayat	39.0	42.3	15.4	1.6	1.6

In the Town Panchayats, 81.3% of the workers have received their wages within the stipulated period of 15 days. On the other hand, municipalities took more time to disburse the wages. Fifty-Nine per cent (58.9%) of the workers were paid after more than a month after completion of work. Similarly in the Corporations, 61.7% of the workers were paid after a month or more. The extent to which the proximity of implementing authority with participants and the role of elected representatives in facilitating the process needs to be explored further in this regard.

In a surprise development, two beneficiaries from a municipality stated that they have received their wages daily. Since it wasn't possible as per the scheme guidelines, the researchers tried to understand the phenomenon during the FGDs. This was apparently made possible by the elected Local body representative who paid them out of his pocket and in turn took control of their ATM card to withdraw the cash once it is credited.

The observations emphasize the need for improving the efficiency and transparency of wage disbursement processes across all ULBs, particularly in the Corporation and Municipality divisions. Addressing the delays and ensuring prompt payment of wages can enhance worker satisfaction, financial stability, and overall participation in the TNUES scheme. Efforts should be made to streamline administrative and banking processes, reduce paperwork, and implement robust systems to facilitate timely wage remittance to the workers.

Wages - Spending trends

It is clear from Table 5 that bulk of the income went towards meeting the requirements of household's everyday consumption expenditure, education and health related expenses.

Table Table 24 - Spending Trends of wages Received

How do you use the wages received from TNUES?	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total
Day to Day Family Expenses	42.9 (57)	45.1 (55)	51.7 (119)	96.7 (231)
children's education	23.3 (31)	23.0 (28)	20 (46)	43.9 (105)
Hospital / Medical expenses	25.6 (34)	24.6 (30)	24.3 (56)	24.7(120)
Savings	6.8(9)	6.6 (8)	3 (7)	4.9 (24)
Other	1.5 (2)	0.8 (1)	0.9 (2)	1 (5)
Total	100 (133)	100 (122)	100 (230)	100 (485)
More than one response collected from 239 women respondent s who worked				

After every day expenses, households spent the additional income on children's education (43.9 %), followed by health expenses (almost 25%).

Overall, the data reflects that while there are some variations in the spending of wages across different ULBs, certain trends are consistent.

Banking Related Issues

> "Many of us in our village have loans with the self-help groups, and having an income like this actually helps because we use it to repay the loans, apart from small expenditures for day-to-day needs and necessities."
>
> Respondent, Manalmedu TP

The Guidelines issued for the project mandates that the wages for the beneficiaries be paid by e-FMS (Electronic Fund Management System) only. Since the eFMS is using the core banking infrastructure, the beneficiaries can hold account in any core banks and the wages can be directly credited to their accounts. While eighty two (82.4%) percent of the beneficiaries across all ULBs (ranging from 79.7% to 91%) have stated that they were not asked to hold or create an account in a specific bank for wage transfers. This suggests that a significant proportion of beneficiaries have the freedom to choose their preferred banking institution. But the problem is with the 17.6% of the workers who have been asked to create an account in a particular bank as instructed by the ULB officials for the disbursement of wages. This has created unnecessary hassle for the beneficiaries and against the mandate of the scheme.

Opinion on wage calculation

The data from Table 26 suggest that there is a higher percentage of the workers acknowledging that the present system of payment being made based on the load / unit / area worked (55.3%) is fine. But 44.7 percent of the respondents prefer the wages are calculated based on the number of hours worked. This can be understood from Tables 21 and 22 where we can see that a significant share of sample respondents stating that they have not received full person day wages because they were unable to complete the assigned quantum of work on a given day.

e-FMS is an seamless payment mechanism which will automatically ensure fund transfer and crediting of beneficiaries accounts leveraging the Core Banking infrastructure (NEFT/RTGS) of banks

Table - Preferred wage calculation

Preferred wage calculation	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	Total across ULBs
Calculation based on no. of hours worked	39 (23)	45.4 (25)	47.1 (57)	44.7 (105)
Calculation based on the Load/unit/area worked	61 (36)	54.5 (30)	52.9 (64)	55.3 (130)
Any Other	0.4 (1)	0.4 (1)	0.8 (2)	1.7 (4)
Total	100 (60)	100 (56)	100 (123)	100 (239)
(Actual Number of Respondents)				

The opinions expressed by the beneficiaries highlight the importance of evaluating the suitability of work allocation, particularly concerning gender considerations. It may be necessary for the ULBs to re-evaluate the tasks assigned, taking into account the physical demands and capabilities of the workers, especially women, to ensure equitable and appropriate workload distribution. Care should be taken to make sure that the beneficiaries/elected representatives are well informed about the standards used to measure work done and person-hours calculations.

Opinion on Working Hours

The data indicates a divided opinion among beneficiaries regarding working hours in the TNUES. While a significant portion believes that the working hours can be reduced, an almost equal percentage finds the current timing workable and manageable.

Table 25 - Working Hours

Opinion on the timing of work	Corporation	Municipality	Town Panchayat	opinion across ULBs
Could be reduced (%)	63.3 (38)	50 (28)	48.8 (60)	52.7 (126)
Timing is workable/manageable (%)	36.7 (22)	50 (28)	51.2 (63)	47.3 (113)
Total (%)	100 (60)	100 (56)	100 (123)	100 (239)

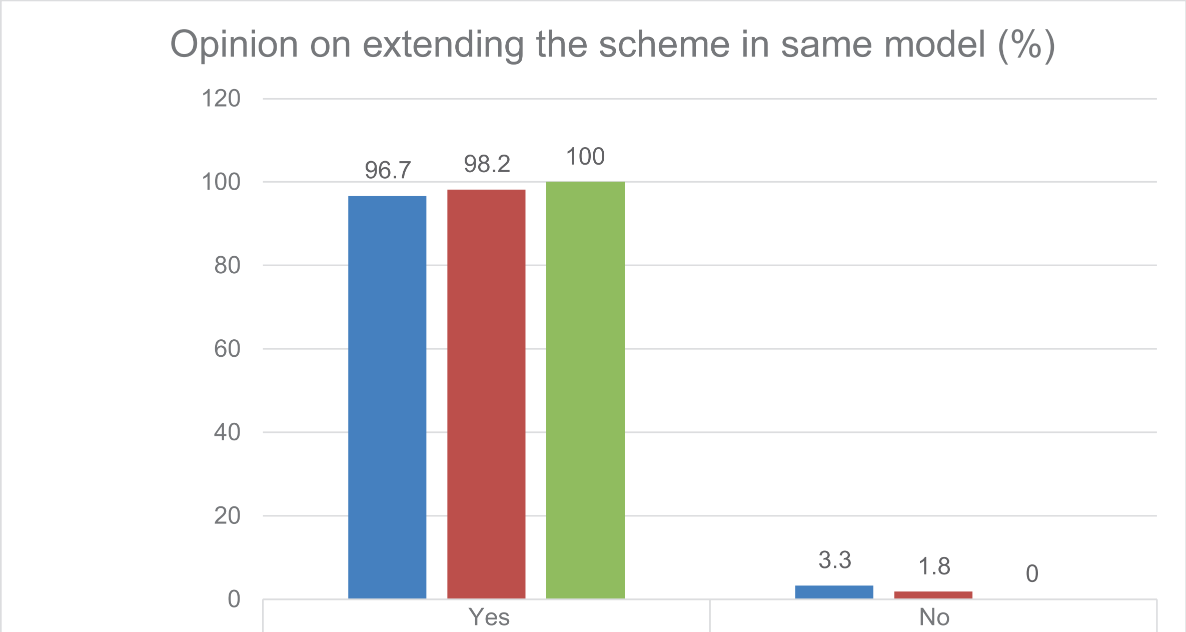
The differing opinions on working hours suggest a need to strike a balance between workload expectations and the time required to complete tasks effectively. Beneficiaries who find the timing workable may be able to manage their tasks within the existing working hours, while those advocating for reduced working hours may feel overwhelmed or burdened by the workload.

Table 27 highlights the importance of considering the opinions and needs of beneficiaries regarding working hours in the TNUES. It suggests a potential scope for reassessing and optimizing the distribution of workload and time allocation to ensure a balance that promotes productivity, well-being, and the efficient completion of tasks. During FGDs, women, especially in the Town Panchayats felt that they should get home before their school going children reach home. A more context-sensitive work regime can therefore be designed.

Opinion on Extending the Scheme to More Number of Days

Across all ULBs (Corporation, Municipality, and Town Panchayat), the combined average percentage of respondents interested in extending the scheme is very high, at 98.7%. This suggests a widespread demand for scheme extension among the urban population.

Figure - Continuation of the project



	Yes	No
Corporation	96.7	3.3
Municipalities	98.2	1.8
Town Panchayats	100	0

Qualitative fieldwork too confirmed this demand. This widespread support can also be attributed to the recognition that the scheme provides guaranteed waged employment, which is particularly valuable for the unskilled population. In Town Panchayats where workers often face seasonal employment, the scheme is perceived as an additional income source during lean periods. Hence, the unanimous 100% support for the continuation of the scheme within Town Panchayats. The limited mobility prospects for married women in such spaces too seems to contribute to this demand.

Suggestions on Future Projects

In order to engage with the high-volume applications received by the ULBs to be enrolled in the TNUES and the demand for extension of the scheme, it is important to diversify the kind of projects taken up by the ULBs. This diversification can bring several benefits, both for the participants and local development, particularly through support for public infrastructure development and maintenance.

The rapid assessment also explored the different kind of projects that beneficiaries will be interested in. The following table provides a list (Table 29).

Table 26 - Opinion on future projects

willing to work on any/all of the given projects	Corporations	Municipalities	Town Panchayats	Opinion Across ULBs
School/ Anganwadi Maintenance (%)	34. 7 (52)	36.3 (53)	32.1 (95)	33.8 (200)
Hospital Maintenance (%)	32 (48)	28.7 (42)	29.1 (86)	29.7 (176)
Government Building Maintenance (%)	32 (48)	32.2 (47)	31.8 (94)	31.9 (189)
Others (%)	1.3 (2)	2.7 (4)	7 (21)	4.5 (27)
Total (%)	100 (150)	100 (146)	100 (296)	100 (592)
More than one response				

Clearly, there is a need to consult ULBs and elected representatives to better understand local demographics, seasonality of local employment and public infrastructure requirements to design and implement such employment programmes. Respondents from almost all the ULB categories mentioned during FGDs that they would be happy to work in government offices, schools, or anganwadis as support staff or cleaning staff. A sense of community ownership was clearly visible across regions, especially in the town panchayats. The participants conveyed a sense of pride in creating better infrastructure for their own communities.

During the Focus group discussion and unstructured interviews, the beneficiaries also listed the following works to be added to widen the scope of work

- Garbage removal (Solid Waste Management)
- Building of home toilets under different schemes
- Micro Composting
- Cleaning and Maintenance of schools and school toilets

- Maintenance of hostels – SC/ST, BC/MBC hostels, Women's hostels and Child Care Institutions.
- ULB owned community halls
- Maintenance of Hospital Hygiene
- Maintenance of Bus stands, terminuses and parking lots
- Cleanliness and Maintenance of different government office buildings and infrastructures
- Setting up of Nurseries and Terrace Garden
- Cleaning and maintenance of water tanks
- Maintenance of burial grounds
- Door to Door information on pending tax payments

5

Supply Side Issues

Measuring Work done

The Annexure to G.O MS (09) dated 11.1.2022 outlines the minimum wage per day and the required amount of work for individuals in various projects across the state. However, gender specifications are not made, creating challenges for women to achieve the given targets. Except in Thiruthuraipoondi and Nellikuppam, none of the ULBs have paid full person day wages to their workers, as they were unable to complete the mandated quantum of work to get the minimum wages on any given day. Hence it is inferred that the workers were unable to complete the task because the quantum fixed was over and above the real capacity and ability of the kind of workers the scheme has attracted.

> “The people usually compare the kind of work given to them to the MGNREGA work in the nearby village panchayat. They expected to be paid the full amount and when we followed the books and paid them for the actual work done there were protests. The people are assuming that we are mishandling the money. But in fact, we are trying our best to do the job that's given to us”
> Town Panchayat official, Edaikazhinadu

> “The kind of soil here in the mountains is not the same as your plains, here post rains it's hard to work on the steps of a check day as the rain would wash away all the already made step markers, and the mud sticks to your feet, it isn't even possible to walk on it, while we are asked to work on the same. Many people have skid down when they tried to work on the check dam project”
> Beneficiary, Devarshola Town Panchayat

Considering that women and the elderly form a significant share of the scheme's beneficiaries, it is necessary to revise the daily work allocation to better suit their capabilities. It is important to highlight that ULB officials adhere to these

norms without considering the local context such as type of soil, water stagnation issues and other factors, resulting in low daily wages, such as INR 70, in districts like Tenkasi. This disparity has sparked protests and discouraged women's participation in the scheme, particularly in Tenkasi.

In the Edaikazhinadu town Panchayat, Chengalpattu district, this led to people protesting against the town panchayat officials and the issue was resolved only after the councillor intervened.

Incidents like these highlight the urgent need for better branding and understanding of this intervention among the public. Despite the awareness of councillors in various districts, they face challenges when dealing with mass grievances regarding wage issues with town panchayat officials.

Furthermore, beneficiaries from Sundarapandiapuram Town Panchayat in Tenkasi, Devarshola Town Panchayat in Nilgiris, and Nerkuppai Town Panchayat in Sivagangai emphasized the importance of considering the local demography and physical characteristics when determining the per day work measures, especially for desiltation projects. The challenging conditions, such as mushy clay soil, make it difficult for women to achieve their allocated work targets in these regions. Even when working in groups, women involved in the maintenance of the check dam project in Devarshola reported falling short of their targets.

Identification of Work

In an ideal scenario, project selection would involve collaboration between local Town Panchayat/Municipal/Corporation officials and elected representatives. However, in reality, a top-down approach seems to be followed where planning engineers from the state headquarters assign projects based on the region's physical features map. This approach neglects the valuable insights and knowledge of local officials. As highlighted by the Town Panchayat officials in Manalmedu Town Panchayat of Mayiladuthurai District, this process can hinder effective project planning and implementation.

In Komaralingam Town Panchayat in Tiruppur, women were not able to work on the construction of earth drain projects because they were not accustomed to such work)Referwork (Refer box item).

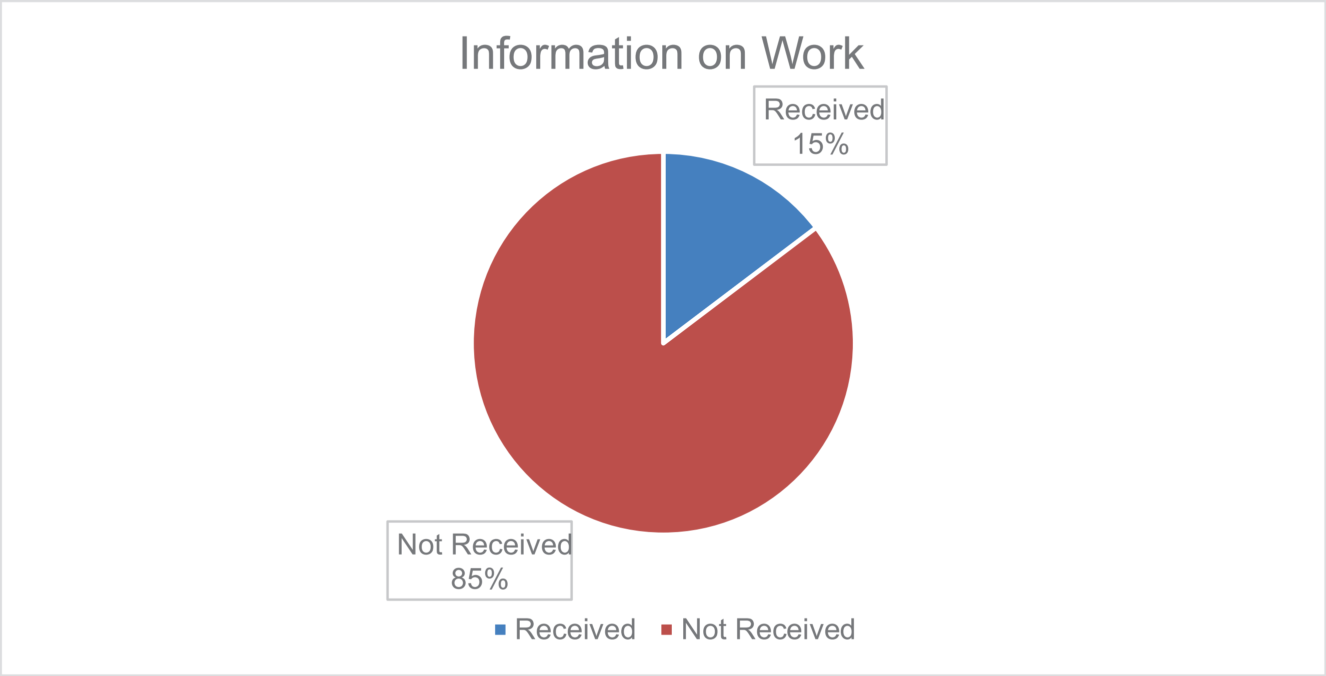
Information on Work

Among the non-workers, 85% of the job card holders have claimed that they have not received any information regarding work, while 15% of the non-workers chose other jobs, had other priorities or ignored the information.

> "The Chief Engineer called us and asked if we would be able to work in these two ponds and we said yes. But we realized that one of the ponds was heavily encroached and we were doubtful of implementation"
>
> Official, Manalmedu TP

During discussions, non-workers opined that information is not equally shared. Different reasons are attributed for not getting information. From the officials' side, they state that since only a few projects were initiated in the pilot model, they were unable to engage all the aspirants. In some places, the works are identified from few wards and the workers and ULB members from that particular ward do not allow other ward members to be engaged as that will reduce the opportunity for the local job card holders.

> In this region for agriculture work men are paid INR 500 per day and women get somewhere around INR 350 but for construction related work men are paid INR 700 per day and women re paid INR 500 per day, so when we ask the beneficiaries to work on the construction of earth drain project they find the word arduous than the agriculture related work and they are expecting a better pay for the same"
>
> Animator, Komaralingam TP.



Discussions during FGDs and observations by the field enumerators also revealed that caste, party and familiarity with the councillor and officials influenced the ability to access information and subsequently, employment. In few places, the 'Mates' take the upper hand and choose those who are close to them and neglect others.

6

Areas of Concern

The guidelines issued for implementation of the project mandates formation of Stakeholders group at Ward Level and ULB Level Council. This institutional mechanism was not to be found in any of the ULBs visited by the assessment team. The State level programme coordinators are expected to identify and establish a network of professional agencies / NGOs / CBOs for obtaining technical assistance to improve the quality of scheme implementation which again seems to be unaddressed.

> The councillor visits us to monitor the progress of work and arranges for drinking water and refreshments from his own pocket
>
> - A beneficiary in Thiruthuraipoondi

Human Resources

In certain Town Panchayats, the responsibility of scheme-related work has been largely delegated to animators, while Assistant Engineers (AEs) and Junior Engineers (JEs) serve as supervisors. However, animators in this role have expressed dissatisfaction with delayed salary payments, sometimes spanning 5-6 months. As a result, some animators have resigned, adversely affecting the implementation of the scheme. Furthermore, these animators do not receive any travel

> “The AE who was working on this scheme was transferred and for the past six- seven months there was no replacement. AE/JEs here are overburdened with work and this has become an additional responsibility. The AE here travels daily to three different locations within the Corporation to collect attendance from the workers and has to maintain these records at office as well apart from other work he already has. We need dedicated resources to work on the scheme.”
>
> Official, Coimbatore Corporation.
>
> Animator, Komaralingam TP.

compensation, despite the need for daily field inspections. Addressing these issues, such as ensuring timely payment and providing travel compensation, is crucial for sustaining effective scheme implementation.

> "The local representatives were present when we issued the job cards and they know every step of implementation of the scheme. They make sure people from their wards get the job in a rotational basis and we will not be able to implement this scheme without their support"
> Executive Officer, Nerkuppai TP

Elected Representatives

Although Elected Representatives at the local level may not have a formal role in the implementation of the scheme, they play a significant role as key stakeholders. People often turn to them for assistance and guidance. The local body representative functions as an informal grievance redressal authority, providing a channel for addressing concerns and resolving issues. As expressed by the Executive Officer (EO) of Nerkuppai Town Panchayat, their involvement and accessibility make them an important point of contact for the community. Recognizing and leveraging the role of Elected Representatives can contribute to improving the overall effectiveness and responsiveness of the scheme.

It is observed that local body representatives in various parts of the state take it upon themselves to oversee the implementation of the scheme and act as intermediaries between the beneficiaries and officials. They play a crucial role in addressing issues related to wages and act as a point of contact for beneficiaries. In some cases, there have been initial challenges in payment of full wages, leading to comparisons with other schemes like MGNREGS and protests from beneficiaries. In such instances, the officials had to engage with the elected representatives to explain the measurement and payment processes, and the representatives were able to

> "There should be a mechanism to bring multiple other kinds of work under this scheme and ensure work already done using machinery or contracts aren't disturbed by this scheme. It takes just days to desilt a pond within the limits of a corporation using a JCB, then why would we make our people work under the scorching sun for menial wages?"
> \- Chennai Corporation Official

communicate and clarify the working procedures to the beneficiaries. While this mechanism has proven effective in certain cases, there have also been instances where local body representatives have interfered in the implementation of the scheme, indicating the need for appropriate checks and balances to ensure fair and transparent execution.

While their engagement demonstrates their commitment and the importance of political will, there are a few reported instances of undue interference. Balancing the role of elected representatives to ensure their support and accountability while maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the scheme is therefore crucial. Clear guidelines and mechanisms should be established to ensure the participation of local body representatives aligns with the objectives of the scheme without impeding its implementation process.

Accountability & Ownership

Due to excessive work load, the local body officials responsible for the implementation of the work at the ground level manifest lack of interest and motivation to innovate and adopt best practices in the implementation of the scheme. This can also be attributed to the absence of direct incentives or rewards specified in the Government Orders for these implementing authorities. As a result, there is a sense of limited accountability and ownership among these officials. Furthermore, the established practices of relying on third-party contracts for getting work done contribute to the perception that the scheme is redundant and the implementation process, cumbersome.

The officials in these positions often lack the authority to make necessary changes to the working procedures based on local demands and job market standards. This lack of control and flexibility hampers the ability to adapt the scheme effectively to the specific needs and dynamics of each location. As highlighted by the presiding officer in Chennai Corporation, there is a need for greater autonomy and decision-making power at the local level to implement innovative measures and address the unique challenges faced in different areas. By empowering officials with the ability to tailor the scheme to local conditions, it can become more responsive and impactful in addressing employment needs and driving sustainable development.

It is evident that a significant portion of the beneficiaries lack familiarity with banking and technology, which creates a need for a mechanism to ensure they have access to and can verify the credited wages. Many beneficiaries rely heavily on physical documentation and often limit their responsibilities to what is explicitly mentioned in the Government Order. This attitude hampers the scope for innovation and limits sense of ownership and initiative at the local level. To overcome these challenges, there is a need to bridge the digital divide and provide appropriate training and support to beneficiaries, enabling them to effectively navigate and utilize technology and banking services. Additionally, efforts should be made to foster a culture of innovation and encourage local ownership of the program, where stakeholders actively contribute ideas and solutions to enhance the implementation and outcomes of the scheme.

The case of Thiruthuraipoondi Municipality in Tiruvarur district exemplifies the importance of local initiative.

“Our President akka does not allow us initially when we wanted to clear the gutter as we may get infected because of the slush in the gutter. But we have told her that, the canal belonged to the community and as community we are responsible for the canal becoming so dirty. So we decided to get the slush cleared and now we are happy the canal is clean and take the responsibility to ensure no one throws dirt into that. The wages we got paid for the work is a bonus for us” exclaimed a beneficiary from the ULB who participated in the FGD.

Thiruthuraipoondi Municipality, during the individual household survey as well in the FGD was acknowledged as a place where the scheme was well implemented. All the respondents who have worked got their wages within two weeks as mandated in the guidelines except for one respondent who had banking issues. The salary too was paid as full day wages as prescribed for the municipalities.

Among the non-workers, all the registered aspirants have expressed their willingness to take up the job if offered in the coming days.

Another notable best-case scenario is observed in Manalmedu Town Panchayat of Mayiladuthurai District, where the issue of encroachments in the ponds was

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Additional Insights

successfully addressed. The workers who form a major part of local community actively participated in the desilting works of the ponds, resulting in the removal of encroachments. This collective effort not only improved the condition of the ponds but also fostered a sense of ownership and community pride. It demonstrates the positive impact of the scheme, as it not only resolves specific issues of infrastructure but also strengthens the social fabric and promotes local ownership of public spaces

Overall, the study revealed that there is large scale demand for this scheme particularly among women from poorer households and from town panchayats.

FGDs and interviews with stakeholders provided several useful insights on the more subtle dimensions of the process of empowerment provided by the programme.

For Women and Poor Households

- Women who are otherwise considered as non-contributor to family economy feel that the scheme gives them a sense of dignity as they now contribute monetarily.
- Though categorised under urban, most of the town panchayats have a semi -agrarian character, with considerable livelihoods derived from agriculture. As those dependent on agriculture do not have work round the year, work under TNUES is an important source of support during off-season.
- Since work is available within the community, it is attractive for women who face mobility constraints to move out of the local body for work. Many women who have been restricted from working by either their parents or husbands are now able to undertake paid work.
- Many women beneficiaries are also dependent on traditional home-based

work like flower arrangements (on piece rate basis), incense stick rolling, beedi rolling etc, which gives them low income but not available on a regular basis.

- The scheme is also useful for female headed households as the scheme provides them not only with income support but also a degree of safety as they work with other women.
- Many women prefer to work in TNUES because the wages are relatively better and allows them to take care of childcare and other domestic responsibilities.
- Working together also is reported to be socially liberating as they spend time sharing their thoughts and enjoy talking to another during breaks.
- The additional incomes also help coping with retail inflation

For the Local Body

- The scheme offers a way to address the issue of both public asset creation as well as maintenance.
- Participation by elected representatives also has the potential to generate demand driven identification of priorities in this regard.
- ULBs with poor budget will benefit from the scheme as asset creation and services can be under taken from the scheme funds.

Local Economy

- In the wake of declining agricultural employment and absence of adequate non-farm work in several town panchayats, the scheme does contribute to demand creation.
- Since the water channels are desilted and cleared of blockages with the help of the scheme, the scheme is likely to benefit agriculture and also augment water supply.
- As the wage rates are lower than in other non-agricultural employment, the possibility of this scheme undermining the viability of local non-farm enterprise does not arise. The limited number of days of employment offered under this scheme also adds to this.

- However, as wages for women in agriculture in the adjoining areas tends to be lower, the scheme may contribute to raising the reserve price of agricultural labour.

Support by officials as perceived by beneficiaries

- The officials visit the workers in the work location regularly
- To mark attendance
- To assign work
- To monitor the work
- To inspect
- To guide
- To enquire for required support in completing the task
- Come at the end to monitor the completed work
- Arrange for drinking water in the location (in some places)

Support by elected representatives as perceived by beneficiaries

- In many ULBs the elected representatives, the chairperson and the ward councillors visit the workers in their respective wards
- Support by arranging drinking water
- In some places they arrange for tea and snacks from their own pocket
- Monitor and support the work by liaisoning with the ULB Officials
- Support if the workers get hurt
- Support in getting the work allocated

1. Women account for bulk of employment under TNUES. The scheme has enabled a share of them to enter the labour market, therefore making them monetary contributors to the household economy and giving them a sense of dignity.
2. Many of the participants are entering into paid employment for the first time, suggesting a scheme of this kind can help improve work participation of women.

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Major Findings

3. A significant majority (69%) of the respondents fall within the age group of 31 to 50 years. Additionally, 18% of the respondents belong to the age group above 50 years, suggesting its importance to women who opt out of the labour market due to life cycle and other social factors.
4. Bulk of those enrolled and those who worked are from Scheduled Castes and Most Backward Castes.
5. They are also educationally disadvantaged. Eighty Three percent (83%) of the respondents have done less than 10 years of schooling, with almost 26% having never been to school.
6. Since work is available within the community, it is attractive for women who face mobility constraints to move out of the local body for work.
7. Many women beneficiaries are also dependent on traditional home-based work like flower arrangements (on piece rate basis), incense stick rolling, beedi rolling etc, which gives them low income but not available on a regular basis.
8. The scheme is also useful for female headed households the scheme provides them not only with income support but also a degree of safety as they work with other women.
9. At least one fourth (24.7%) of the respondents who have enrolled in the scheme are primary breadwinners in the family.
10. Majority of the women who participated in the survey (55.1%) claimed that they were not employed anywhere at the time of the survey. TNUES has successfully contributed to the increase in the participation of women in the work force

a. Almost 18% of those enrolled are from female headed households

indicating the potential for the scheme to address the most vulnerable women.

11. The women reported that the work is socially liberating as they spend time sharing their thoughts and enjoy talking to each other during breaks.
12. 22.6% of sample workers are from the agricultural sector, indicating the role of TNUES in compensating for variations and decline in agricultural employment.
13. A considerable percentage of respondents (34.7%) have applied for the TNUES job card without fully understanding the kind of works to be offered by the scheme.
14. A significant proportion of the respondents (57.4%) who have applied for TNUES job cards are unaware of the per day wages offered under the scheme.
15. Majority of respondents who have received work under the TNUES scheme expressed their willingness to work in the future.
16. 60.7% and 35% of the workers received less than 10 days of work in municipalities and Town Panchayats respectively.
17. Ponds and Drainage desilting work was the major works carried out by the ULBs. Eighty-one (80.8%) percent of the respondents have been engaged in desilting work. The next highest type of work offered was Tree plantation, park maintenance and Jungle Clearance.

a. According to elected representatives and officials, ULBs with poor budget are getting benefitted from the scheme as the asset creation and services are under taken from the scheme funds.

18. A longer notice period on employment availability and time of availability can have several advantages, such as giving beneficiaries the opportunity to arrange transportation, coordinate with family obligations, and allocate their time effectively. More than 39.3% of the respondents report to have been informed about availability of work only the previous day. This poses problems for them.
19. A significant percentage of beneficiaries across all ULBs (46.03%) rated

their work as difficult but still managed to complete it.

20. Ninety Three (92.9%) percentage of beneficiaries felt that facilities like washrooms, water availability, and break time will be an added advantage.

21. The lowest wages received by a worker was Rs. 60 in Sundarapandiyapuram Town Panchayat in Tenkasi and Ananthapuram in Villupuram District. As the pay was piece-rated and rates fixed at the state level, the prescribed work norms did not take into account the age and gender of the participants, and the local conditions of soil, terrain, etc making it difficult for participants to meet the norm in some cases.

22. While almost 62% of the participants got wages within the stipulated time, the remaining participants reported delays. A much smaller share reported delays of more than 2 months.

23. The additional income accruing to the households was mostly spent on day to-day expenses, followed by education and health expenses.

24. Across all ULBs, almost 99% of respondents wanted the scheme to be continued and expanded.

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Recommendations

1. An annual calendar of work should be developed for each Town Panchayat (TP), Municipality, and Corporation, taking into account agricultural seasons, existing seasonal occupations, local needs, festivals, and other relevant factors. This should be done without disrupting local small businesses.
2. Priority should be given to the elderly, infirm, pregnant and lactating mothers, and the differently abled. Officials and elected representatives have suggested that officials can be empowered with discretionary powers to assign specific or reduced amounts of work to these individuals. However, clear norms and documentary evidence should be established to avoid favouritism.
3. There is potential to expand the scope of work under the TNUES to include construction and maintenance of public assets. Skilled labour can be assigned to contractors, while unskilled work can be distributed among cardholders under the TNUES scheme. A list of possible works can be compiled for reference.
4. Considering the demand expressed by workers and non-workers during the study, there is a clear need to scale up the scheme to cover all Town Panchayats and more municipalities and wards in corporations.
5. Skilling initiatives through institutions like Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC) can be considered to enhance the skills and productivity of workers enlisted under TNUES.
6. Working hours and the quantum of work should be made flexible to accommodate women with family/child care responsibilities.
7. Arrangements should be made to provide drinking water and refreshments, especially when work is assigned in isolated areas where access to tea shops is limited.

8. Supplying necessary tools such as spades, mortar pans, crowbars, etc., to the workers can facilitate their work. Also, motorised hand-held tools must be designed to support workers especially if the scope of asset creation is to be expanded.
9. The upper age restriction of 60 years should be extended, similar to the MGNREGA, to include single women and aged men who bear the responsibility of managing their families.
10. The selection of Mate (supervisor) for every 50 workers should be reduced to 25, and the mates should be changed on a rotation basis.
11. First aid boxes and sanitary napkins should be made available at the workplace to ensure the well-being of the workers.
12. Transparency and accountability should be emphasized. This can be achieved through the development of a mobile application and a dash board that presents information about the works undertaken, beneficiaries, and wages paid. Biometric attendance can be implemented for accurate attendance tracking.
13. Regular updates should be provided to ULB representatives regarding planning, implementation, and evaluation of the scheme.
14. Direct payment, along with detailed wage calculations, should be made to each employee.
15. Information boards displaying information about the works undertaken, beneficiaries, and wages paid can enhance transparency.
16. Creating GIS tag for the works undertaken should be made mandatorily to avoid duplication of work and to ensure quality of work completed.
17. The ULBs can maintain a centralized repository for GIS data of the works already undertaken, where all team members can access and contribute to data. This helps in preventing duplication by ensuring that everyone is using the most up-to-date data in developing annual plans in the lines of Bhuvan Portal by ISRO.
18. Formation of Area/Ward Sabhas can facilitate the identification of works, rotation of beneficiaries, and other decision-making processes.

19. Meetings at the ward level should be conducted with beneficiaries to address their concerns and gather feedback.
20. Various types of works can be taken under TNUES to expand the scope, including garbage removal, micro composting, maintenance of schools and school toilets, hostels, community halls, hospitals, bus stands, government office buildings, nurseries, terrace gardens, roads, water tanks and burial/cremation grounds. They can also be used to disseminate door-to -door information on pending tax payments should be provided within localities to ensure better compliance.

Conclusion

The scheme has demonstrated its capacity to create job opportunities for urban residents, increase women's workforce participation, reduce unemployment rates and enhance income stability in urban areas. The program's positive impact on the socioeconomic conditions of beneficiaries, particularly vulnerable populations, indicates that it is effectively contributing to poverty reduction and social inclusion. The scheme has proved that it has the potential to stimulate local economies through the implementation of public infrastructure projects, fostering a cycle of economic growth and development. The rapid assessment has made it evident that the program has significant potential to address employment challenges as well as build infrastructure for improving local development outcomes in urban areas.

Annexures

Abbreviations used in document

TNUES	TamilNadu Urban Employment Scheme
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
ULBs	Urban Local Bodies
TP	Town Panchayat
TNSDC	TamilNadu Skill Development Corporation
EO	Executive Officer
AEs	Assistant Engineers
JEs)	Junior Engineers
GCC	Greater Chennai Corporation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisation
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
PWD	Public Works Department
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organisation
e-FMS	Electronic Fund Management System
DMA	Directorate of Municipal Administration
DTP	Directorate of Town Panchayat

Annexure – Suggested Implementation Model

The model is proposed based on the inputs received from Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES) stakeholders during the rapid assessment.

The Implementing / Placement Agency

Directorate of Municipal Administration and Water Supply

- Unemployed skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers who require jobs on a short-term basis register with the placement agency
- The scheme would cover skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Whenever a skilled worker is employed, one or more assistant (semi-skilled and unskilled) worker could employed as well, based on the requirement to impart an element of training and skill formation in the scheme
- The Approved institutions create a list of jobs/roles to be performed in their department/unit/ office for which they require skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers
- The approved institutions approach the placement agency for Job Stamps with a requirement list on the number of workers and the no of days required.
- The list of works should not be so broad as to displace existing jobs in public institutions
- The scheme and salary should not be too attractive for workers engaged in other enterprises to switch to TNUES.

Approved Institutions

Government, Municipal and other statutory organizations under the state government who require human resources on short term – ad-hoc basis.

- The approved institution takes the list of members enrolled with implementing agency from their town panchayat, municipality or corporation

Annexure – Suggested Implementation Model

	CORPORATION						MUNICIPALITY						TOWN PANCHAYAT						TOTAL ACROSS ULB's						Total Respondents		
	Worked			Not Worked			Worked			Not Worked			Worked			Not Worked			Worked			Not Worked					
Community	F	M	**T**	F	M	**T**	F	M	**T**	F	M	**T**	F	M	**T**	F	M	**T**	F	M	**T**	F	M	**T**	F	M	T
ST	0.7	0.0	**0.7**	0.0	0.0	**0.0**	3.8	0.0	**3.8**	0.0	0.0	**0.0**	1.0	0.0	**1.0**	0.7	0.3	**1.0**	1.6	0.0	**1.6**	0.4	0.2	**0.5**	1.9	0.2	2.1
SC	21.7	4.3	**26.1**	19.6	7.2	**26.8**	24.2	5.3	**29.5**	33.3	4.5	**37.9**	17.6	2.4	**19.9**	11.1	1.7	**12.8**	20.1	3.5	**23.7**	18.4	3.7	**22.1**	38.5	7.2	45.8
MBC	7.2	0.0	**7.2**	5.8	2.2	**8.0**	9.1	1.5	**10.6**	5.3	0.8	**6.1**	12.2	3.4	**15.5**	18.2	3.0	**21.3**	10.2	2.1	**12.4**	12.2	2.3	**14.5**	22.4	4.4	26.9
BC	5.8	1.4	**7.2**	6.5	6.5	**13.0**	5.3	0.8	**6.1**	3.8	0.8	**4.5**	9.5	1.7	**11.1**	11.8	2.0	**13.9**	7.6	1.4	**9.0**	8.7	2.8	**11.5**	16.3	4.2	20.5
Others	0.7	0.0	**0.7**	0.0	1.4	**1.4**	0.0	0.0	**0.0**	1.5	0.0	**1.5**	1.4	0.0	**1.4**	1.7	0.3	**2.0**	0.9	0.0	**0.9**	1.2	0.5	**1.8**	2.1	0.5	2.7
Undis closed	7.2	0.7	**8.0**	0.0	0.7	**0.7**	0.0	0.0	**0.0**	0.0	0.0	**0.0**	0.0	0.0	**0.0**	0.0	0.0	**0.0**	1.8	0.2	**1.9**	0.0	0.2	**0.2**	1.8	0.4	2.1
Total	43.5	6.5	**50**	31.9	18.1	**50**	42.4	7.6	**50.0**	43.9	6.1	**50.0**	41.6	7.4	**49.0**	43.6	7.4	**51.0**	42.2	7.2	**49.5**	40.8	9.7	**50.5**	83.0	17.0	100

* This table includes all the respondents men and women, both worked and not worked in the scheme

The Rapid Assessment of

Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme

In our collective journey towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the efforts of the Government of Tamil Nadu is pre-emanating. The **Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme (TNUES)** is a stellar example of such an endeavour with an emphasis on poverty reduction, employment and gender participation in urban areas.

The scheme was designed to revitalize urban livelihood in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis and to address urban poverty. It strategically targets select Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), spanning Corporations, Municipalities and Town Panchayats across the State to reignite economic growth.

The State Planning Commission has carried out this assessment on TNUES's impact on the ground with meticulous stratified sampling, insights through Focus Group Discussion from diverse Zones, Municipalitiesand Town Panchayats. This insightful analysis not only sheds light on the scheme's effectiveness but alsoidentifies critical factors influencing its implementation.

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